

*LA VIDA JAIBERA*: THE GENDERED WORK AND MIGRATION EXPERIENCES OF FEMALE  
GUESTWORKERS IN THE RURAL SOUTHEAST

Holly Straut Eppsteiner

A thesis submitted to the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of  
Sociology.

Chapel Hill  
2013

Approved by:

Jacqueline Hagan

Sherryl Kleinman

David Griffith

© 2013  
Holly Straut Eppsteiner  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

## ABSTRACT

Holly Straut Eppsteiner: *La Vida Jaibera*: The Gendered Work and Migration Experiences of Female Guestworkers in the Rural Southeast  
(Under the direction of Jacqueline Hagan)

Recruitment of female guestworkers by the U.S. seafood processing industry provides Mexican women with opportunities to support their families financially through legal, seasonal labor migration—but at the cost of family separation. Interviews with workers from two plants in the rural Southeast and two former workers demonstrate that the separation of production and reproduction means that women must negotiate migration within gendered models of marriage and motherhood across borders. Their accounts indicate that family contexts interact with precarious legal status to shape women's migration experiences, possibilities for permanent settlement, and U.S. labor market opportunities. Despite classification as “temporary nonimmigrants”, I find that crab pickers, or *jaiberas*, use seasonal migration to the United States as a long-term strategy to support families in Mexico, and are held in temporary positions in both locations. Political and labor market contexts and family arrangements subject them systems of control that have important policy implications.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members Jackie Hagan, Sherryl Kleinman, and David Griffith for their valuable guidance on this project from its early stages, helping me get started in the field, and for their comments on drafts throughout the process. I recognize financial support from the UNC Institute for the Study of the Americas, which helped fund my fieldwork in Springville. I also extend my appreciation to Sarah Gaby, Arne Kalleberg, and Michael Dunn for their helpful comments on previous drafts. I'm grateful to Ariana Chenlo Padilla and Yudiana Gonzalez for their help with transcriptions. I'd especially like to thank my husband George for his moral support and unwavering encouragement. Most of all, I'm very appreciative to the *jaiberas*, current and former, for their time and generosity in sharing their experiences and opening up their homes to me.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
RESEARCH SITES AND SAMPLE .....	6
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	8
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS.....	16
MAKING THE DECISION TO MIGRATE.....	19
HOW THEY COME: GUESTWORKER RECRUITMENT AND SOCIAL NETWORKS .....	30
GENDERED JOBS: WHY <i>JAIBERAS</i> AND NOT “JAIBEROS”? .....	36
COMING AND GOING: MAINTAINING MOTHERHOOD IDENTITY ACROSS BORDERS .....	48
CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION.....	63
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE (CURRENT H-2B WORKERS).....	75
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE (FORMER H-2B WORKERS).....	79
REFERENCES.....	84

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IRCA	Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Area
NELM	New Economics of Labor Migration Theory

## INTRODUCTION

*It is a tremendous thing. Someone who has not had this experience... it has not been easy, una vida jaibera...*

—Isabela, Riverview, Virginia crab worker

Isabela<sup>1</sup>, 46, is a thin, attractive woman with olive skin, long dark hair, and a warm smile. Although she appears young for her age, closer examination reveals worry lines around her face. Her sunny, friendly disposition gives way to tears as she expresses feelings of loss and sadness when she talks about the children she leaves behind in Mexico each spring in order to work in the United States. Isabela has spent 13 consecutive seasons working as a crab picker (*jaibera*, in Spanish) in a small, unincorporated rural town in coastal Virginia. From approximately April until December each year, Isabela has left behind her husband and four children in a small community in Sinaloa, Mexico to pick crabs at Riverview Seafood Processing. Isabela is part of the H-2B migrant labor stream, which allows U.S. employers in eligible industries, like seafood processing, to contract workers from eligible countries for temporary or seasonal non-agricultural work.

Women like Isabela are guestworkers—invited to come to this country to labor in its seafood processing plants during the appropriate season, but with the expectation that they will return to their countries of origin. *Jaiberas* cannot bring their children with them to the United States, and H-2B is a “nonimmigrant” visa classification, which means there is no path to legal residence or citizenship for these workers. Unlike historic generations of guestworkers who were overwhelmingly male agricultural workers, the crab processing

---

<sup>1</sup> All names of participants, towns, and plants are pseudonyms. All translations are my own.

workers with H-2B visas are mostly women. Working in this industry provides women like Isabela an opportunity to support their families financially. Their earnings in the United States go toward building houses, sending children to school, and paying bills in Mexico. This financial support, however, comes at the cost of long periods of family separation.

*Jaiberas* defy “traditional” gender expectations in many ways: rather than remaining in Mexico while their husbands migrate, they become labor migrants and primary breadwinners, and leave their husbands and children behind in Mexico. Despite these deviations from “traditional” household and work arrangements, the *jaiberas*’ experiences cannot be interpreted as entirely autonomous or empowering. While in some ways these women have shifted from traditional gender roles, *jaiberas*’ migration and U.S. labor force incorporation are also constrained by gender. Their migration decisions are mediated through men and their U.S. jobs are gendered, at times, to their disadvantage relative to male workers. Their long-term prospects for settlement or full membership are shaped by their liminal legal status in combination with their gendered obligations as mothers and wives.

This research, based on interviews with Mexican seafood processing workers from two plants in the rural Southeast, examines the gendered experiences of a relatively understudied niche of female labor migrants. As global labor migration streams have become feminized, immigration scholars have increasingly focused on the gendered processes of migration, rather than viewing gender solely as a variable to predict discrete outcomes. In this study, I add to the literature at the intersection of gender, labor migration, and family. Since the 1990s, research on labor migration in the care work<sup>2</sup> industry has

---

<sup>2</sup> I use care work and domestic work interchangeably



emerged as a major subset of scholarship in this intersectional field (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Hagan 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Parreñas 2001; Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2004). This scholarship focuses on poor women from the global South who migrate to work in emotional-labor intensive jobs in developed nations in order to support the families they leave behind (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013).

Care workers and *jaiberas* both share the burden of family separation, but they migrate under very different labor force and political contexts. These conditions have implications for the ways women shape their identities as mothers across borders and women's opportunities for labor force mobility and permanent U.S. settlement. Domestic workers are engaged in long-term emotional labor (Hochschild 1989) in the service industry, while *jaiberas* enter seasonal production work in the food-processing industry. Domestics work as nannies, eldercare workers, and housekeepers, jobs that require them to care for other women's children or elderly relatives, while leaving behind their own families. For some transnational mothers, focusing their emotional manage labor on other women's families creates strong feelings of guilt (Parreñas 2001). Other care workers, in the absence of their own children, focus their affections on their bosses' children/relatives as a coping strategy (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Parreñas 2001). *Jaiberas*, meanwhile, are engaged in the decidedly non-emotional labor of picking crabmeat.

The legal contexts in which these two female labor groups enter the United States also vary. Many domestic workers are undocumented migrants. Their unauthorized legal status, as well as limited financial resources, prevent them from returning home, often for

many years<sup>3</sup> (Parreñas 2001). *Jaiberas*, however, are documented workers who are involved in intense transnational relationships. Because of the conditions of their visas, as well as the seasonal nature of their work, they are consistently returning home from the United States to be with their families in Mexico. This impacts the ways women negotiate their identities as mothers and wives. For example, while Rhacel Parreñas (2001) found that Filipina mothers coped with the emotional strain of family separation by repressing emotions and delaying reunification with children, often for several years, *jaiberas* return home to their families every eight months, and maintain a strong familial attachment throughout the year, particularly with children. Rather than repressing their emotions, the promise of family reunification at the end of each crab season helps women see the light at the end of the tunnel while they are working in the United States.

In addition, regular family reunification creates conditions under which permanent settlement in the United States is unappealing and unrealistic for *jaiberas* who have husbands and children in Mexico. Rather than focusing on incorporation in the United States like female care workers, these women make investments in their homes and families in Mexico, to which they plan to return permanently. This is also shaped by temporary legal status, which offers no pathway to permanent U.S. residence for women or their families. Domestics, on the other hand, often intend to return home, but end up staying in the host country (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Parreñas 2001).

My research contributes to the study of gender, migration, and transnational families by considering the case study of an understudied worker population whose work and legal contexts differ from previous studies in this area. In this thesis, I examine the

---

<sup>3</sup> Joanna Dreby's (2010) work on Mexican transnational parents in New Jersey finds that this is the case not just for care workers but also for undocumented migrants who work in other industries.

following questions: (1) What are the conditions under which Mexican women enter the U.S. crab picking industry as temporary guestworkers? (2) How do *jaiberas'* work and migration experiences shape their identities as women and mothers? (3) What are the implications of *jaiberas'* seasonal labor migration for gendered household arrangements within their families? (4) How does women's embeddedness in transnational families shape opportunities and desire for U.S. settlement?

The findings that follow have important theoretical and policy implications. Like other scholars, I demonstrate that migration is a gendered process at all stages: decision-making, recruitment, work experience, and intentions for settlement or return. My research demonstrates that women's participation in this labor stream complicates "traditional" notions of motherhood and fatherhood. I also find that H-2B program particularly disadvantages women with children, who have few pathways to U.S. settlement (whether legal or unauthorized), and constrains them to precarious, vulnerable employment situations. My discussion of *jaiberas'* work and migration experiences are particularly relevant to the persistent political debate over immigration reform in the United States and the future of guestworker programs.

In this thesis, I examine the gendered processes and consequences of women's temporary labor migration. I begin with a description of my research site and sample. Next, I review the relevant literature on guestworker programs, new destination migration, and gender and migration. I follow with an outline of my research design and methods. Then, I analyze the *jaiberas'* experiences throughout the migration process. First, I discuss the conditions under which *jaiberas* make decisions to migrate as part of a household strategy and the ways this migration is induced through employer recruitment and social networks.

Next, I discuss the workers' U.S. jobs, including the ways these jobs are gendered and the consequences of gendered work arrangements. Then, I discuss women's family arrangements, the ways they negotiate their identities as mothers across borders, and the implications of transnational motherhood for settlement intentions. In this section, I draw comparisons from the experiences of two former *jaiberas* who have left the crab industry and settled permanently in the United States. I conclude with policy implications, which I believe are particularly relevant as both Congress and the American public debate the future of immigration and guestworker programs.

## RESEARCH SITES AND SAMPLE

I conducted interviews with crab processing guestworkers in two towns: "Springville," North Carolina, and "Riverview," Virginia. These two towns are among several other small, rural coastal communities along the Atlantic coast in Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina that hire Mexican workers to process crab. Aside from a handful of men, the two plants recruit nearly all female employees. There are approximately six female workers for every male at both the Springville and Riverview plants, and former H-2B workers who worked in other plants indicated similar ratios of women to men.

Workers in both sites live in employer-provided housing. Unlike the H-2A agricultural program, which requires employers to cover housing costs, H-2B workers must pay their employers for rent, which is deducted from their paychecks. In order to run major errands (most grocery shopping, buying clothes or other durable goods, and to purchase phone cards) workers in both plants rely primarily on employers to provide weekly bus trips on Sundays to a nearby Wal-Mart and, sometimes, a Mexican *tienda*.

Dependence on employers for work, housing and transportation indicates that many *jaiberas* live under conditions of intense control that are reminiscent of a total institution (Goffman 1961; Griffith 2006).

Springville, an eastern North Carolina town, is located near the Albemarle Sound, which opens up into the Atlantic Ocean. According to the U.S. Census, Springville has a population of approximately 500 people, with a racial composition that is 52 percent white and 43 percent black. There are 15 self-identified Hispanics<sup>4</sup>. Springville workers told me they pay \$100 per month for their housing in a former elementary school. Workers share gender-segregated, dormitory-style bedrooms in converted classrooms (married couples share smaller bedrooms). The classrooms/bedrooms serve as semi-private space used for sleeping, relaxing, and watching television. Workers share communal bathrooms, the former cafeteria kitchen, as well as a small laundry room. Although they still rely on employers for transportation for most of their shopping needs, Springville workers live within walking distance to the center of town, which features a Piggly Wiggly supermarket and two Dollar stores. Springville has a myriad of Protestant and non-denominational churches, none of which, according to the workers, offer services in Spanish.

Riverview is located near the Chesapeake Bay in Virginia. There is no census data available for the town of Riverview, because it is classified as an unincorporated community<sup>5</sup>. Census data for the county in which Riverview is situated, however, lists a

---

<sup>4</sup> The U.S. Census' definition of Hispanic/Latino ethnicity refers to a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race.

<sup>5</sup> According to the U.S. Geological Survey Geographic Names Information System, an unincorporated community is a populated place that is not a census designated or incorporated place having an official federally recognized name.

population of 12,346 people spread across 191 miles. Seventy-three percent of residents are white, 25 percent are black, and 3 percent identify as Hispanic/Latino. The women I interviewed in Riverview are divided between two large, old two-story white farmhouses with screened-in porches, set against a landscape of soybean fields. They share smaller bedrooms, with 2-3 workers to a room, and told me they pay \$33 per week for rent. The farmhouses in Riverview are set farther from town in a pretty, pastoral setting, which can be reached from a windy, narrow road. Their houses are located too far to walk to the nearby dollar store or any other establishments. A local pastor, who is American but speaks Spanish, picks up the women most Sundays and provides them with a special church service, separate from regular services.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

I draw on literature in three areas to frame this thesis: migration to new destinations, guestworker programs, and gender and migration. I explore the history of U.S. guestworker programs and situate contemporary guestworkers' incorporation in the context of global economic restructuring and changes in U.S. immigration policy that occurred during the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These changes have led to the dispersal of immigrants from "traditional" destination states and a rise in immigration to "new destination" states in the Southeast and Midwest. The changing economic and political contexts of migration have also induced increasing proportions of female migrants.

### *U.S. Guestworker Programs*

Neither legal residents nor undocumented settlers, guestworkers occupy an in-between membership status in the United States. Cindy Hahamovich's (2003) comprehensive review of the history of guestworker programs in Europe and the United

States demonstrates that both historic and contemporary guestworker programs have been implemented in response to "an uncomfortable marriage to those who desired and those who resented foreign workers" (78), often under the conditions of labor shortages caused by economic restructuring or war. Guestworker programs allow immigrants to cross the border to work in temporary or seasonal jobs, but prohibit them from gaining full membership in the host country. Cecilia Menjivar's (2006) concept of "liminal legality," used to define ambiguous legal status, is relevant here.

In the wake of labor shortages during World War II, Mexicans were recruited for agricultural labor through the *Bracero* Accords (Massey, Durand, and Malone 2002; Durand, Massey, and Capoferro 2005). Soon after, the United States also created the H-2 program, which allowed employers to recruit workers from the British West Indies. These guestworker programs were established with strict policies against family reunification and permanent settlement: U.S. guestworkers, all of whom were male, were not allowed to bring family members and were required to return home at the end of the season. The *Bracero* program ended in the 1960s, in response to claims that the workers were "depressing wages and living conditions for farmworkers throughout California" (Hahamovitch 2003: 87) but the H-2 program remained intact, with workers concentrated in sugar cane harvesting in Florida. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA), which prohibited employers from hiring undocumented workers, led to the expansion of the H-2 program (Hahamovitch 2003).

The current H-2 visa program continues to be structured to appeal to employers' needs for seasonal labor, while discouraging the permanent settlement of immigrants. H-2B (nonagricultural) employment must be for a period of less than 10 months during the

year, and the number of H-2B workers is capped at 66,000 people per year. The top H-2B industries include resort and hospitality services, retail sales, landscaping, food service and processing, and construction<sup>6</sup>. Visa holders may only work for the employer listed on their visa petition; if workers fail to report to work, leave without notice, or are terminated prior to the end of the contracted period, employers are required to notify U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services within two days. Temporary visa applicants must also prove “compelling ties” to their home country to prove intent to return<sup>7</sup>.

### *Latina/o Labor Migration in the “New South”*

After the *Bracero* program ended in 1964, unauthorized migration continued to flourish in the United States, through the social networks migrants had established (Massey et al. 1987), and because of U.S. neoliberal economic policies that propelled migration from Mexico to the United States during the 1980s. Economic restructuring, along with immigration policy reform, led to the dispersal of migrants from traditional settlement areas like Texas, California, and Arizona to places like Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee (Kochhar et al. 2005; Zúñiga and Hernández-León 2006).

Nora Hamilton and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla (1996:207-208) describe how the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), in conjunction with restructuring efforts following Mexico's 1980s economic crisis, led to Mexico's dependence on external finance and investment, making the Mexican economy vulnerable and resulting in the collapse of

---

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/Resources/Resources%20for%20Congress/Congressional%20Reports/H-2A%20and%20H-2B%20Nonimmigrant%20Worker%20Classifications.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types\\_1271.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1271.html)



the peso in the 90s. Mexican unemployment increased because private firms were unable to compete with imported goods and manufacturing shifted away from traditional industrial cities to low-wage factories in border cities. NAFTA was especially detrimental to Mexican agricultural employment, as it allowed the free movement of U.S. agricultural goods across the Mexican border. As American corn and Smithfield pork flooded local markets, prices fell and Mexican farmers went out of business. Emigration became a survival strategy for Mexicans faced with unemployment and low wages. Ironically, Mexican farmers, displaced by companies like Smithfield, ended up moving to North Carolina for jobs in its booming hog processing business (Bacon 2012). NAFTA allowed for the free movement of goods, but not the free movement of labor, so many workers came with unauthorized legal status.

Neoliberal policies also changed the U.S. economic landscape, moving large corporations overseas. Smaller, domestic firms that could not keep up with high interest rates found ways to cut labor costs, including relocating to areas of the United States that typically pay lower wages (like the South) and hiring cheaper labor—often, immigrants (Hamilton and Stoltz Chinchilla 1996). Employer demand for non-union “labor made cheap” (Enloe 2004) caused dramatic shifts in the racial and ethnic composition of workers in industries like construction and food processing, as foreign-born workers began to replace native workers (Hamilton and Stoltz Chinchilla 1996; Mohl 2003). Raymond Mohl (2003) explains that for employers in the Southeast, “Hispanics represented an ideal low-pay, low-turnover, non-union work force” (43).

Latina/o workers in the Southeast are concentrated in the construction, landscaping, light manufacturing, and service industries (Hagan, Lowe, and Quingla 2011;

Leach and Bean 2008), and food processing (Griffith 2005; Ribas 2012). By 2000, nearly 46 percent of employees in the animal slaughtering and processing industry and 41 percent of seafood industry workers were foreign-born (Donato et al. 2008). While many of these employees are unauthorized migrants, some industries, like food processing, recruit documented guestworkers through the H-2B program. Employers in search of greater profits not only prefer Latinas/os because they can pay them less, but as Katharine Donato and Carl Bankston (2008) found, they also value the "soft skills" they attribute to Mexican workers, such as motivation and a strong work ethic. In fact, Roger Waldinger and Michael Lichter (2003) argue that employers of low-skilled, immigrant labor are more concerned that workers have subordinate attitudes than technical skills.

#### *Female Labor Migrants and Transnational Households*

The gender composition of migrant streams changed during this period as well. Female immigrants in the United States more than doubled from 7.3 million in 1980 to 17.2 million in 2004 (Fry 2006). This growth can be attributed in large part to family reunification after many male labor migrants were given legal status through IRCA (Durand, Massey, and Parrado 1999) as well as to an increase in "feminized" labor migration. Economic restructuring led to growth in the service, garment and healthcare industries, and increased the demand for migrant female workers to fill jobs in these industries (Sassen 1984).

Yen Le Espiritu (1997:89) argues that employers prefer immigrant women for these jobs because they assume women will be more willing to work for lower pay in jobs with little mobility, and believe that they are more suited for detailed or routine tasks. James Tyner (2003) explains that although capitalism did not create systems of gender inequality,

“it has, however, benefited from the incorporation of... sexually discriminatory norms, ideals and attitudes” (67). In other words, employers use sexist ideologies to justify women’s concentration in low-wage, low-prestige service and care work.

Much of the sociological research on female labor migrants has focused on domestic work, jobs which are usually filled by undocumented women or women following their husbands in migration (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Hagan 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Parreñas 2001; Romero 2002). However, the evolution of U.S. guestworker programs has also introduced migrant women laborers through the formal channels of the H-2B visa to fill jobs in the service-oriented tourism industry and in the production-oriented seafood processing business (Griffith 2006).

Michael Burawoy (1976) writes that migrant labor is embedded in structures of the labor market, industrial organization, and the State. These structures work together to separate “maintenance” and “renewal”: circular migrants maintain themselves financially through seasonal employment in the host country while sustaining household reproduction (renewal) in the home state. The separation of work and family fosters transnational ties between migrant laborers and their families. In her study of Filipina domestics, Parreñas (2001) cautions against viewing transnational ties as symbols of migrant agency. Rather, she claims that transnational households, such as those with women working in the destination state separated from children in the sending state, perpetuate the inequalities of globalization. Because of the unequal development of nations, the costs of household reproduction are cheaper in labor-sending countries than in destination states. Therefore, employers in the receiving country benefit from low-wage labor, while avoiding the costs of family reproduction.

Several studies show that female labor migrants face significant emotional burdens as they work in a foreign country to financially maintain their families in their home country. Male labor migrants also face the difficulties of family separation, but female migrants' arrangements conflict with traditional expectations of motherhood more than those of fatherhood (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Dreby 2010). Gendered expectations of mothers complicate the relationship between bi-national spheres of production and reproduction. Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ernestine Avila (1997) coined the term "transnational motherhood" in their work on Latina domestic workers to describe women who left behind their own families in Latin America to care for the homes and families of middle or upper-middle class U.S. families. Pulled between traditional ideals of Latina motherhood and the need to provide for their families financially, "they are initiating separations of space and time from their communities of origin, homes, children, and—sometimes—husbands. In doing so, they must cope with stigma, guilt, and criticism from others" (552).

Joanna Dreby's (2006; 2010) study of transnational families also discusses the gendered perceptions and discourse of transnational parenting arrangements. Mexican family members view transnational fathers as honorably supporting their families, while women frame their migration as helping their husbands. Men's relationships with children depend on their ability to be good providers, but transnational mothers, in addition to providing economic support, are expected to do emotion work (Hochschild 1979). In order to maintain their relationships with children—they must "demonstrate emotional intimacy from a distance" (Dreby 2006:56). Arlie Hochschild (1989) frames marriages as "economies of gratitude." In traditional marriages, husbands are responsible for the

family's socioeconomic status, which woman can contribute to but cannot claim—they cannot “‘do social class’ for the family” (98)—even if they earn more than their husbands. In this model, women's paid work is framed as a supplemental gift—and women who work are still responsible for the home and family.

The expectation that mothers should provide emotional support for their children places extra strains on female labor migrants. Ricardo Contreras and David Griffith (2012) found that female crab workers feel that despite their efforts to improve the quality of their children's lives by providing material benefit, their absence for most of the year has significant emotional costs, including an inability to provide emotional support to their families from a distance. The Filipina women Parreñas (2001) studied justified the emotional strain of family separation by claiming that the economic gains outweigh the emotional costs and “rationalize the need to sacrifice intimate familial bonds for the collective family's material well-being” (123). These women were unable to return home on a regular basis because they could not risk interrupting their employment. Parreñas notes that Filipinas repressed their emotions in order to delay reunification with children, often for several years. However, as I will discuss, emotional repression is an unlikely coping mechanism for H-2B guestworkers who return to see their children every eight months. Rather, reuniting with family on a regular basis maintains relationships that strengthen emotional ties to the sending community while discouraging incorporation and settlement in the receiving community.

It is important not to isolate gender solely in the context of family ties, or to only consider women's roles as mothers. Gender extends beyond the sphere of family into other social and economic arenas, often intersecting with other systems of stratification such as

legal status, race/ethnicity, and class. For example, scholars have examined the gendered nature of immigrant social networks (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Hagan 1998), the social organization of work (Sassen 1984; Acker 1990; Reynolds 2001; Waldinger and Lichter 2003), and immigrant attitudes toward settlement (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Goldring 1996). In their review article of gender in ethnographic studies of immigration, Sarah Mahler and Patricia Pessar (2006) argue that gender ideology influences the type of work that employers find suitable for women and men, “because gender is so deeply implicated in people’s notions of male versus female work” (48).

The findings that follow contribute to the literature on guestworker programs, new destination migration, and gender and migration. I explore the ways that crab processing, which has no overtly “feminine” characteristics (i.e. it is not a service job, does not require emotional labor) has been constructed as a “female” job. Female guestworkers have received relatively little attention from scholars. I examine the conditions under which women enter the H-2B labor migration stream and the ways they experience this work in the United States, as well as its implications for transnational, gendered family arrangements.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

I interviewed 24 workers and former workers: 13 women and two men from the Springville plant, seven women from the Riverview plant, and two former *jaiberas* (both women), Carol and Elba, who have left the industry and settled permanently in an eastern North Carolina city. Most women are in their 40s; the youngest was 34 and the oldest was

65. All but two interviewees had children: one female Riverview employee and Carol, a former H-2B worker. Sixty-five percent of the current female workers and both of the male workers are married. Carol is legally separated and Elba is single (she is separated from her partner but they were never married). With the exception of one male worker, all interviewees came from communities in the state of Sinaloa, which is located in Northwest Mexico along the Pacific coast.

I used an inductive, grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2006) for my data collection and analysis. Following this approach, my processes of data collection and analyses of that data were intertwined. I began interviewing current workers in Springville in fall 2012, during the latter part of the crab-processing season, which runs from approximately April until December. When the workers returned in summer 2013, I continued collecting interviews in Springville, and also began interviewing workers in Riverview, Virginia, as well as former workers in Eastern North Carolina. I used a convenience sampling strategy among the current worker population at both plants, because the populations in the plants were small (35-40 people) and I wanted to interview as many workers as possible. I was also limited to interviewing workers who were willing to speak with me in the first place and who were present during my visits to the plants. I used snowball sampling for the former workers, which is typically the best strategy for finding hard-to-reach populations (Morgan 2008).

I interviewed all current workers during non-working hours at their employer-provided housing. In Springville this was a table in the large, shared kitchen or at a table in the interviewee's shared bedroom. In Riverview, I interviewed workers in the living room of one house and on the front porch of another. I met with the former H-2B workers at

locations that were convenient for them. For one worker, this was her office at the small business she runs, and for the other, a bookstore café. I gave each participant a small gift after their interview as a token of thanks for their time. I gave current H-2B workers Mexican phone cards, and former workers a box of chocolates.

Interviews were semi-structured with primarily open-ended questions about labor history in Mexico, experience in the seafood processing industry, making the decision to migrate and reasons for migration, entrance into the U.S. labor market, social and work experience living in Springville or Riverview, family, future plans, and settlement intentions. I discussed the same topics with former workers, as well as their decisions to leave the industry, and labor and settlement experiences after leaving. I followed interview guides (see Appendices A and B) but allowed the conversation to shift depending on the topics that emerged. I conducted all interviews in Spanish, with the exception Carol, who was fluent in English.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Shortly after each visit to the plants or meeting with former workers, I typed up observational field notes as well as “notes on notes” (Kleinman and Copp 1993). I imported interviews and field notes into ATLAS.ti software program for coding. Following grounded theory, I drew upon themes that emerged from the data for codes, rather than pre-conceived concepts. Using open coding, I identified salient themes on a line-by-line basis in each interview and set of field notes. As patterns emerged, I began using more analytic codes (for example: “sister working in plant” or “friend working in plant” would be coded as “social networks”). As I read through and coded the data, I drafted analytic memos (Charmaz 2006) about patterns



and themes that began to emerge from the data. These memos included chunks of data, my interpretation of the data, evidence for that interpretation and analysis.

In the thematic findings that follow, I begin by discussing the ways women make decisions to migrate and the ways migration is structurally induced by employer recruitment and social networks. Next, I explore workers' accounts of the social context of crab processing work in the Springville and Riverview plants and the ways jobs are gendered. Finally, I discuss the ways women's labor migration impacts women's identities as mothers and wives, transnational family relationships and the ways family embeddedness shapes women's settlement intentions.

#### MAKING THE DECISION TO MIGRATE

Verónica, 34, has 15 years of experience working in crab. Prior to that, she worked in agriculture, cutting tomatoes, chile, and cucumbers. She came to the United States to work as a *jaibera* for the first time at age 18, when she found out from some women in her community that it was a good job opportunity and that she could earn more as a *jaibera* than she could working in *el campo* (the fields). She told me how she made this decision together with her husband:

The economy wasn't very good, aside from that we were recently married, and we said, "Well to start to have our own things," to have the necessary things of a marriage, and I said, "Well I'll go and I'll help you." And he worked too, and after a while we started to make our home, our little house that we lived in. It was this more than anything, because since I was living with my mother-in-law, I wanted to move out on our own, and I started to buy my own things, by myself. This was the motive.

Verónica took a break from migration from 2005 until 2011, but told me that she decided to re-enter this migration stream when her household situation changed: her husband left, no longer having any involvement with their children. She came back to work in the United States in order to provide for them and to pay for their studies, because she wasn't able to

earn enough in Mexico to do this. Clearly, Verónica's decision-making processes were part of a household strategy to maximize earnings: first, as part of a young married couple, seeking to create their own home, and later, as a single mother, left to provide for her children alone.

The "new economics of labor migration" theory<sup>8</sup> (Stark and Bloom 1985) views migration as a household, rather than individual, decision. NELM theory explains that migration decisions are made in order to maximize earnings, diversify income sources, provide resources for investment, and circumvent limited credit markets (Stark 1991; Massey et al. 1998). As NELM would predict, the women in my study undertake migration as a household decision in order to sustain their families' financial wellbeing. For some women, like Verónica, migration becomes a strategy to provide for their households in the absence of a male provider. Women both circumvent and reify traditional gender ideology as they negotiate their migration decisions with husbands. Yet I also find that household decisions occur within structural contexts, including economic opportunities in labor markets at home and abroad.

*Frames of Reference: Comparing U.S. Seafood Processing with El Campo and La Pesca*

Roger Waldinger and Michael Lichter (2003) find that immigrant workers have a "dual frame of reference"—they judge job conditions not by standards of the host country, but by the standards of their home country. For most of the women, this frame of reference is Mexico's primary sector, particularly agricultural work and fishing, which they refer to as working in *el campo* or *la pesca*. Workers find U.S. seafood processing preferable to Mexican primary sector work because it pays more and because the working conditions are

---

<sup>8</sup> Hereafter, NELM

better. In addition, the U.S. seafood processing season picks up when the Mexican agricultural industry ends, so U.S. labor force participation occurs at a time when they have no work (or fewer options) in Mexico.

Agriculture is a dominant industry in Sinaloa. According to Mexican census data, approximately 17% of Sinaloa's working population is employed in the primary sector (which includes agriculture and fishing, as well as forestry, hunting, and cattle)—about 5% higher than the national average (INEGI 2010). Many of the workers I interviewed have prior experience working in *el campo*, (and often have husbands who still do) and have been able to earn more since moving into the crab industry. One of the key earning differences between working in *el campo* and working as a *jaibera* is that *jaiberas* earn based on the amount of meat they can produce, rather than a set hourly rate—as Maricela explained, “Since we work for *producción* (piecemeal), one earns more than working hourly or for a daily [rate].”

In addition to paying more, workers viewed thought the conditions of agricultural labor were less preferable than working in *jaiba*. Verónica told me she would never return to agricultural labor, even if it were in the United States, because she thinks agricultural work is more physically demanding and because she feels she has more autonomy as a *jaibera*:

If they told me ‘we’re contracting you to go work in *el campo*,’ I would say ‘oh no.’ Why? Because in *el campo* well it’s heavier [work], you’re in the sun; you have to walk around bent over... here no. Here you work standing up and if you want to leave to take a break, you go. You are the boss of your own schedule and you adjust, you leave to eat when you want to.

Rosalía explained that these difficult conditions and low pay in *el campo* factored into both her migration decision and the decision of some of her children to migrate without documents:

*El campo* is very *pesado* (heavy) because the sun is really strong, it's really hot there, hotter than here. People work all day in the sun, it's very heavy. You work all day to earn 60 pesos (about \$4.60), that's the minimum salary, and it's very little. And because of this, people risk losing their lives... they risk everything.

Migrating as a *jaibera* allowed Rosalia to leave these conditions and low pay for a job that she sees as more desirable and better paid, and to do so without facing the risks that undocumented labor migrants endure:

Because of this, one try to take very good care with your job because if you end up losing this opportunity [to migrate as a *jaibera*]... much less when one is older, that you would go risking to come illegally, well, it's really dangerous. I never thought to come this way [undocumented]. Well, I never thought of coming legally or illegally, but things happen. Only God knows how opportunities will present themselves...

Another important aspect of agricultural and fishing work that leads women to U.S. labor migration in seafood industry is the seasonal nature of all these industries. The agriculture and fishing happen to end around the same time that the U.S. seafood-processing season begins. Laura explained, "The work in *el campo* starts in September, and it finishes around March." U.S. seafood processing picks up right around the time that Mexican agricultural work ends, with workers arriving in April and returning to Mexico in November. Other women came from fishing communities, which had similar work seasons. When I talked with Leticia in July 2013, she told me "right now there's nothing, the work in *el campo* still hasn't started, and [my husband] starts working in fishing... at the end of August or early September." Participation in the U.S. seafood processing industry provides *jaiberas'* families with a way to diversify their sources of income and circumvent employment shortages, which is particularly important because of the contingent nature of the seasonal industries in which they are concentrated. Some women worked as *jaiberas* in Mexico prior to coming, and some still do during their seasonal return, but find that the work pays better in the United States. Other women choose not to work in *la jaiba* during

their returns, because the hours are too short to earn much, as Leticia told me: “No, in *la jaiba* no... because you start [work] and there are four hours, you enter early and then at 11:00 the work ends in Mexico.”

Many women explained that the money they earned in jobs in Mexico “*no alcanza*,” or isn’t enough, even in non-agricultural jobs. For example, Maricela has a high school degree, and also pursued a technical degree in accounting. After graduating, she worked in accounting for one year, but wasn’t able to earn enough to meet her expenses:

“I saw that I earned very little. They paid me every two weeks... and after two weeks I had spent more than I had earned. And so I saw that here [in the United States] you earned more, and I started to work hard here and well you earn much better... what you earn here in a week, you earn every two weeks in an office job [in Mexico].”

These accounts indicate that women find U.S. crab processing work to be much more economically productive relative to the poor labor market conditions in Sinaloa.

#### *Working Abroad to Support Families at Home*

Women need to earn in order to support their families, and aren’t able to do this working in Mexico. Family support is an impetus not only for initiation into migration, but also perpetuates migration over many years—sometimes decades. Overwhelmingly, workers told me that they migrated to support a better life for their children. This included providing better housing, funding education, helping adult or married children with expenses, and generally helping their children “get ahead.” In this way, they associate their work with the moral obligations of motherhood.

Isabela explained that she came because of the “condition” in which her family was living. When I asked her to describe this condition, she said:

We lived in a tremendous condition of poverty. My oldest child wanted to study and I couldn’t provide for his studies, and the house, it was a little house, and it would rain and the roof, made from boxes, would leak and it was sad because I didn’t have a place to raise my children.

Like Isabela, many women told me that they migrated in order to build or improve a house or to pay for a plot of land. Miguelina, who has worked in crab processing for 20 years, recalled her family's housing condition before she started coming: "we had a little house made of tin... we didn't have anything, just the floor and two little rooms made of tin and cardboard. We had nothing, nothing. We were very backward."

With the exception of one woman, all of the workers interviewed had children. Providing for children's educations or helping them "get ahead" (*sacarlos adelante*) was particularly important. For some, it was the sole reason they continued to migrate. Leticia has one daughter in university and a son in high school, who also hopes to attend college. When I asked Leticia about her future plans and whether she intended to continue migrating, she told me, "I say that as long as they bring me I will keep coming, until my children graduate. Until they get their degrees and practice [a profession]. And then when they graduate, then... [I'll] stop coming."

Maricela is 44 years old and has been migrating to the U.S. to work in this industry for 20 years. She is a single mother to an 18-year-old daughter who is currently a university student. She told me, "...One is always looking to live a little—or try to live a little better and give a better quality of life to one's children and because of this you keep coming." I asked her whether her work in the United States makes it easier for her daughter to be able to study, and she responded

Yes. Yes because the schools [in Mexico] are expensive. Here [in the United States] for example, you [Americans] can tell me it's also expensive. Yes, but here you have more ability to study. For example here you can get credit to study and in Mexico no.

Her response gives credence to NELM theories that migration is an attractive source of capital when individuals lack access to lenders in the sending country. Daniela also told me

that she works in order to support her children, and especially to pay for their education.

She has been migrating since 1992 and would like to stop, but feels she has to continue

because her 16-year-old daughter plants to attend college:

I've been working for many years now and I don't want to [keep working] but if my daughter goes for her degree by force I have to come, in order for her to get ahead in her studies, because it's a lot of money one pays in order to study.

Implicit in many women's descriptions of the way their work supports their children was the inability of men to provide this support. Men figure prominently in women's decisions to migrate. For single mothers (or women are still married but whose husbands are otherwise absent), the absence of their children's fathers places the burden on them as single earners in the household. Rosalia started migrating after she and her husband separated, because she could no longer to afford to sustain her family:

Now that I was alone, because I've been separated for about eight years, well I had to find something because a person on their own, with the work in Mexico, it's not enough to sustain the house, to buy clothing and all of that... it's not enough for anything.

She explained further that her husband stopped providing any financial assistance to the family after they separated:

[After we separated], he didn't help me anymore with the children. I had to work in order to put food on the table... In Mexico they don't require that fathers help you, it's not like here where they require that fathers support their children, there no, there [in Mexico] it's very different.

Daniela told me she had stopped migrating when she had children, but had to start coming to the United States to work again when her husband became incarcerated: "I stopped coming for three of four years when I was raising my children, when they were little. But then when they arrested [my husband], he became imprisoned, by force I had to come to work." These accounts indicate that the absence of children's fathers creates conditions under which women feel that they have no other choice but to become labor migrants.

For women in two-parent and double-earner households, many said that their husbands do not earn enough to support the family. In some cases, women's husbands worked as fishermen in Sinaloa, and weren't able to earn enough because, as they put it: "*no daba el mar* (the sea wasn't providing)." Others' husbands worked in agriculture, where they earned low wages and were susceptible to seasonal breaks in employment, as described previously. Some women's husbands are physically unable to work—Ana, Isabela, and Leticia have husbands with medical conditions or injuries that prevent them from working in Mexico.

#### *Negotiating Gendered Expectations*

Although women's accounts indicate that their work abroad is critical to their families' well being, several indicated that their husbands were reluctant about their migration. When recounting their experiences of making the decision to migrate, women usually frame themselves in traditional gender roles by expressing that they need their husbands' permission to come work in the United States and by framing their work as "helping" husbands. One now-single woman told she did not migrate when she was married because her husbands wouldn't permit her, and another told me she waited to migrate because her husband insisted that she wait until their children were grown. Other women superficially subscribe to these patriarchal ideologies, but demonstrate resistance to them. For instance, some women whose husbands didn't want them to come before their first migration came anyway, and others whose husbands wanted them to stop migrating later on continued to come. In many cases, men's *macho* reluctance toward wives' migration was supplanted by financial need.



Verónica worked in *el campo* since she was a young girl, but implied that earning was primarily her husband's responsibility. She told me that she kept working in Mexico after she was married in order to "help him with the expenses." She also told me that her husband exercised authority over her decision to migrate: "We came to an agreement, because if he hadn't given me permission, I wouldn't come. So he gave me permission and I came." Sometimes, male control prevents entrance into migration entirely. Rosalia didn't start coming until after she and her husband separated in part because her husband wouldn't let her while they were married, despite her attempts to come:

He said no, because I did try various times. I told him, "Let me go with my mother (a migrant *jaibera*), this way I can help you." ...But he was really vicious, he drank a lot. From the little earnings he had coming in, he spent more on his vice than he did to support the house. And before that, when my children were little for this reason I didn't separate from him out of fear that I wouldn't have anyone to help me, or he would watch the kids so I could go out to work. I endured a lot with him. For 30 years I put up with it.

Rosalia's case was extreme compared to most of the other women I spoke with—this is likely because other women in situations like hers have not entered this migration stream at all.

Some women explained that their husbands didn't like the idea of their wives migrating at first, but consented because their family financial situations depended on it. In some cases, it took years for men to agree. Vanesa told me she has been migrating to work in Springville for four seasons, but she has worked in crab in Mexico for approximately 18 years. She told me that although she had wanted to migrate for many years, her husband wouldn't allow her to come until their economic situation in Mexico became more difficult:

H: Did you ever think about coming [to work in the U.S.] when your children were young?

V: Yes. Since before they were born... but my husband didn't allow me, because we were recently married. I'm talking about 20 years back, I wanted to come but he didn't let me.

H: No? What did he say to you?

V: Well, people say a lot of things about it here [in the United States]; that people stay, that they don't return home, and I don't know. I think that's why. And now, yes, no it's very difficult. The more years that pass, the more difficult it is. There's hardly any work like there used to be...

H: Why do you think he changed his mind?

V: Because like I said, there's not enough there [in Mexico]. We were both working, but it wasn't enough and since now it's much more difficult, there's no work right now, and we [women] have this opportunity to come here and we come. And the men stay there and get a little work here and there... but it's not like here, where you work, and work, and work. No.

Accounts like Vanesa's demonstrate that for some husbands, letting their wives migrate to work in the United States was a last resort. Her husband's work is precarious, while U.S. migration provides her an opportunity to "work, and work, and work," to support her family. Leticia also experienced tension between her desire to migrate and her husband's reluctance to allow her to come.

H: What did your husband think when you were going to come [to the U.S.]?

L: Well first he told me no, but...

H: First he said no? Why?

L: Because, well, my children were little, but then later, well now the first time, the second time, the third....

H: So he said no, but you came?

L: Yes, I just said, "I'm going to get the passport, because I'm going to go." But one always has to check with him [her husband].

Ultimately, Leticia made her own decision to come, and followed through even though he did not consent. However, she still frames the event through a lens of spousal permission. While going to get her passport was perhaps an act of resistance, she followed this up by stating that his opinion was still important. Isabela also told me that she had to convince her husband to let her start migrating, recounting the conversation:

He told me, "How are you going to go? I should be the one that leaves." "But you don't have the opportunity, I have it, let me go." And he didn't want me to but I told him "Trust me." Because a lot of people, they go [to the United States] and they go to stay. But no, I said, "I'm not thinking about staying. I'm thinking about getting ahead." This is what happened... it was difficult to convince him.

Thirteen years later, her husband wants her to stop migrating, but she cannot because of the family's circumstances. Not only is there not enough work in Mexico for her husband, a fisherman, but he suffered an accident that left him physically unable to work. When I asked her what her spouse thinks about her continued work in the United States, she told me:

He always tells me “I don’t want you to go now,” every year, every year. “It’s not easy for me,” he says, “staying her for so long, it’s difficult, I have to deal with so many things...” When the day nears that we leave to come [to the United States] he only tells me “Ay, I don’t want you to stay away now,” but now with what’s happened to him, I have to come, I have to come.

I asked Ana whether her husband was content that she was migrating, she told me “Well if he’s not he has to put up with it because with his illness he can’t work. But yes, one comes with the agreement *de ellos* [of men].” The tension in this statement is apparent: from one perspective, Ana demonstrates her independence, indicating that it doesn’t matter if her husband approves of her migration or not—he has to put up with it anyway because of the family circumstances. However, she is careful to add that this agency really exists within the constraints of male approval.

Laura Raynolds’ (2010) study of female workers in a Dominican Republic pineapple plantation similarly found that women defined their labor force participation in reference to their roles as mothers—something they must do to support their children because their male partners were either absent or had lower earnings. In this context, women were defying norms about gender and work, particularly because agriculture is considered to be “men’s work” in the Dominican Republic. However, Raynolds notes, women’s concerns about such transgressions “were often muted by the knowledge that they were working to feed their children” (16).

Women’s migration decisions are not made in a vacuum. They are formed and balanced in response to economic constraints, family circumstances, and patriarchal control. For most women, these are household-level decisions made to negotiate precarious and seasonal labor structures in Mexico and invest in their households and children, as depicted in the new economics of labor migration model. What the NELM model fails to take into account, however, is the ways these household decisions are

gendered processes. First, married women must negotiate male authority when deciding to migrate, and men, in turn, may concede patriarchal authority when they are unable to provide for their families on their own because of labor market or health constraints. Single women may decide to migrate because of the absence of male authority (ex husbands no longer denying them permission) or because their husbands stop providing financial support for their children. I argue that dominant theories of migration, like NELM, stand to gain from such gendered analyses. Household decisions are embedded in the power relationships of households, not just their economic circumstances.

#### HOW THEY COME: GUESTWORKER RECRUITMENT AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

We lived away from the crab plant that was nearby, and they brought people over there [to a nearby town] to work... and I said, "I'm going to go work there" because there's nothing to do, so I could work to earn money. And one of my friends invited me and we went there and I learned. And at that point Isabela was already coming [to the United States] to work and one day I asked if I could have the chance to come with her to work, and later [I talked with] with Leticia, to see if they could accommodate me to come. And they told me "we'll check, we'll see what we can do" and yes, one year before coming I set out to go to learn because my wish was to come to the United States to work, and it was really difficult at the beginning, but I had to learn and I learned there [in Mexico]. –Victoria, 37, Riverview

Victoria's account of entering U.S. crab processing points to the significance of two factors that allowed her to migrate: first, her experience working at a Mexican crab plant, and second, social ties with women who were already migrating to the United States who could help get her the job. Women identify two main paths of recruitment: through employers and labor recruiters at Mexican crab plants, and referrals via family members, friends, or other members of their social network already working in the United States. Recruitment paths are not mutually exclusive. For instance, some women were recruited while working in a Mexican crab plant but also migrated because friends and family who had previously worked in the plant encouraged them to do so. Period of migration

impacted mode of recruitment. U.S. crab employers began recruiting Mexican women in the late 1980s (Griffith 1996; 2006). Interviewees who came during the early 1990s were more often directly recruited from their jobs or through labor recruiters. Women who came later got the jobs through referrals from contacts within their social networks. These findings are not surprising—other studies have shown that over time, employers move away from formal recruitment of migrants and rely more on migrant social networks (Massey et al. 1987; Waldinger and Lichter 2003; Griffith 2006).

Immigration scholars have long recognized that workers with low levels of traditional human capital rely on social networks to gain access to jobs in the United States. Scholars have also found that network recruitment is valuable to employers because it reduces their costs for recruitment and training and can institute a system of social control (Waldinger and Lichter 2003; Griffith 2006). Network recruitment also benefits workers, by providing social support and information about migration and jobs in the destination country (Massey et al. 1987, Waldinger and Lichter 2003). Waldinger and Lichter (2003) found that eventually, recruitment through social networks can create social closure, allowing workers to exclude “outsiders” from employment in certain firms or occupations. Employers may eventually prefer immigrant labor to native-born workers, because immigrants’ outsider status makes them more subordinate to employers (Waldinger and Lichter 2003; Waters 2009).

#### *Recruitment from Mexican Crab Plants*

Some women who worked as *jaiberas* in Mexico explained how their Mexican bosses’ relationships with U.S. employers initially facilitated their entrance in the U.S. labor market. For instance, Teresa, a Springville employee, explained how she was recruited from

her workplace in Mexico: “In the plant where I was working, the woman who was our boss, she brought people over. She brought all of the women who wanted to come. So, I started to come with her.” Maricela told me she came because the boss at her plant had an agreement with the American plant owner: “[I came] by means of the company where I was working there [in Mexico]. I started coming in 1992, and my boss [in Mexico] was associated with Tom Smith, who was my boss here [in the U.S.]... they had a relationship.” Juana first came in 1996, when she was recruited at a crab plant in Mexico. I asked whether she knew other women who had worked as *jaiberas* in the United States, and she explained, “No, at that point no. You didn’t hear about people coming at that time.” Soon, however, migrant *jaiberas* began sharing their experiences with women in their social networks, and thereby changed the way women entered the U.S. crab processing labor force.

### *Personal Networks*

Over time, recruitment networks shifted from formal hiring practices through Mexican plants to personal network referrals. Women who were recruited in earlier years began introducing these jobs to their sisters, daughters, nieces, friends, and colleagues. Women in Sinaloa began to see how their female friends and family members were benefitting from working as *jaiberas* in the United States. For instance, Victoria, Isabela’s friend and neighbor, told me, “When Isabela first came [to the United States], she had a little house made of wood and cardboard. And I realized that when she started to come, the next year she built a house, and I said, “If she went, I want to go too, so I can build a house.” When she decided to pursue a U.S. job, Victoria tapped her social networks, as indicated in

the narrative at the beginning of this section. I asked whether she also talked to a labor recruiter, and she responded:

No. Leticia (her friend and neighbor) talked to him. At that time, the recruiter... was a relative of Leticia's. So she asked the guy if he needed more workers, because she had two people, and the man told her, "Well if they're *descarnadoras* and they know how to work, tell them to get their passport so they can come work." And Leticia called me and said "Hey, do you still want to come to work?" And I told her, "YES! Yes I want to go. Why, is there an opportunity for me to go?" "Yes," she told me. "Go get your passport." I remember I didn't have the money for the passport and I had to borrow it.

Victoria was not only influenced to migrate by the experience of Isabela, but also relied on Leticia, another friend, to get a referral for the job. Like Victoria, many of the women I interviewed obtained their U.S. jobs through a connection with a friend or family member in the industry. Teresa, whose initial entry was facilitated through her boss in Mexico, relied on social capital get a job in a different plant when that boss stopped recruiting people: "My sisters were coming here [to Springville] and so we came together." Men also used networks to get jobs. Jorge, a Springville worker, explained to me that he got his job through a male friend: "He got me the job. And they told me that there would be an opportunity to come here to work if I wanted to come, and why not?"

These accounts demonstrate that social capital has become just as important, if not more than, human capital for getting these jobs. In other words, as the old adage goes: "It's not *what* you know, it's *who* you know." Rosalia told me that it can be difficult to get a job as a migrant *jaibera*, "Because sometimes the labor contractors sign up a lot of people, and sometimes they bring very few. They don't bring all of them." I asked whether she knew how they selected which workers to bring, and she wasn't sure: "... I don't know. Thank God they chose me. When I decided to come and they gave me the opportunity to sign up, I didn't have a hard time." What Rosalia didn't point out, but that may have given her an advantage over other women, was her connections with family members already working

in the plant where she got the job. Her mother and sister Laura had already been working as *jaiberas* in North Carolina for 18 and 12 years, respectively, when Rosalia first came.

The seafood processing industry's participation in the H-2B visa program has presented an opportunity for women in Sinaloa to enter the United States through authorized labor migration. This migration stream originated through formal and informal recruitment methods but has become increasingly driven by social networks. Because the opportunity structure is gendered, so are the social networks that direct workers to the crab industry.

Crab processing employers' reliance on recruitment through social networks is not unique to Mexican migrant workers—David Griffith (1999; 2006) found that crab-processing employers relied on kinship ties for recruitment of African American women even before Mexicans entered the crab labor market. The crab plants he visited in the 1980s sometimes had three generations of women working side by side. Employers used these kin networks to deal with what they defined as “worker reliability” problems—never knowing how many pickers would show up to work on a given day. With kin networks, employers expected that older women would exert authority over younger women and keep them accountable (Griffith 1999 76-77). Although the crab picking labor force demographic has changed significantly, from local African Americans to Mexican guestworkers, social networks still play a key role in women's entrance in this occupation.

#### *Recruiting “Skilled” Workers*

Networks alone weren't usually enough for workers to get U.S. jobs. Most workers are required to first get some experience at a crab plant in Mexico. I found that most women worked as *jaiberas*, albeit briefly, in Mexico before recruiters would hire them for



U.S. jobs. For instance, when Rosalia wanted to join her mother and sister as a U.S. *jaibera*, she told me the labor recruiter consented as long as she could meet a certain threshold for crab picking:

I asked [the labor recruiter] if he could bring me. 'Well yes,' he told me, 'if you know how to pick crab, yes.' I told him 'Yes, I'm working now as a crab picker and I'm going to keep working.' [He responded] 'Yes, when you see that you're picking the minimum, then I will be able to bring you.'

The required experience to train for working in the United States was usually only a few months. Rosalia told me that she was able to meet this minimum after about six months of working in Mexico. In many cases, like Verónica's, women were able to come after only one month of work experience. She told me, "In this month, I learned the basics. And then here [in the United States] was when I started to practice more..."

Some were able to circumvent experience requirements by getting a job through their social network, or by having non-crab U.S. work experience, but these were exceptions. Isabela had no experience when her cousin got her the job—a deficit that she had to hide in order to come: "I came here without knowing anything about the job... I told [my cousin] that 'I don't know anything about this job,' and well she had to tell the contractor that I did know so that they would bring me." She also told me that she suffered her first season in the United States because she did not know how to pick crabs: "I didn't know how to do the work, and I saw that the others worked a lot and earned a lot, and I couldn't do it, I couldn't do it. Oh, it was so difficult!" Isabela's account demonstrates that women benefit by having some experience prior to coming to work in the United States. While crab picking may be considered "unskilled," there is a learning curve for this work. When I asked women about crab picking, many told me that now, after many years, it is easy for them and they are able to work very rapidly. However, at the beginning, they

struggle with the work, and are unable to pick fast enough to maximize their piece rate earnings. U.S. employers stand to benefit from hiring women who have already given their hand a try at picking crab for a few months before coming. This way, Mexican plants assume the cost of training, while U.S. plants hire women who are already somewhat adept at their jobs, if not yet experts.

While women indicate that some baseline experience is required to get jobs in the Springville and Riverview plants, it does not seem required for men, who work in support jobs rather than as crab pickers (discussed in detail in the next section). For example, I asked Jorge, the male employee mentioned previously, whether his wife ever considered coming with him to work in Springville. He responded: “Well, she doesn’t know how to pick crab meat. She knows how to fillet fish, but not how to *descarnar la jaiba* (pick meat from the crab). So here you have to know how to *descarnar la jaiba*.” This is interesting, because Jorge did not, in fact, have experience in this industry. While it’s much harder for men to enter into the crab processing migration stream in the first place, if they can get an “in,” they aren’t required to get experience first. Women, on the other hand, have more opportunities to get jobs at U.S. plants but must first learn the job in Mexico.

#### GENDERED JOBS: WHY *JAIBERAS* AND NOT “*JAIBEROS*”?

As a woman, there’s work that I can’t perform that the men do... Or better, yes, I do it, but it takes me a little more effort. Like carry boxes, which is heavier [work]. But I don’t say, “*Ay*, I won’t do it.” No. But yes, it takes me a little more sacrifice. And maybe the men yes, can perform, because years before, with this boss that I came with, he contracted male pickers. Because the men produce a lot because they’re like, more aggressive... But as my grandmother used to say, *cada changa a su mecate*. (to each his own). We come to pick, they come to cook crab, do the cleaning, and to each his own. --  
Veronica

As Veronica indicates, U.S. crab plants have a strongly gendered division of labor, with men performing “heavy” labor, and women working as crab pickers. Over time,

workers have internalized these gendered jobs, which they feel suit their talents as feminine and masculine individuals.

*Feminine Crab Picking and Masculine “Trabajos más Pesados”: Gendered Division of Labor*

Jobs in the crab plants can be grouped as “female jobs” and “male jobs.” Women hold the central roles as *descarnadoras*, or crab pickers, and constitute the majority of the workforce in both plants. *Descarnadoras* earn piecemeal, earning approximately \$2.30 per pound of crabmeat they pick. The *descarnadoras* generally work standing up in front of a table, where men serve them crabs that were cooked the night before (it’s easier to remove the meat when it’s fully cooled). The women use a knife to cut open the crab shell and pull out the meat, which they place in a container that is then weighed and packaged by hourly female employees or male workers, and then shipped out to be sold for retail.

Jorge explained to that men’s jobs were largely roles to support the women in the main task of *descarnando*, including cooking the crab and the technical operation of a machine used to process the pincers:

The men... we dedicate ourselves to do everything to serve the women the crab, operate a machine that processes the meat, the pinchers, you have to tend to the machine. And when they put us with the women, we serve them the crab, so that they don’t run out because they earn what they process, and we earn by the hour.

His language of “serving” the female workers indicates that women’s roles are the core jobs, and that other jobs exist to support this work. Eduardo explained a typical day of work to me: “I prepare the water to disinfect and after this I assemble a machine for the crab, and a woman helps me to package (the meat). And we finish the day cleaning everything.” Jorge and Eduardo’s accounts indicate that men’s jobs keep them working long hours—they work while the women are picking meat during the day, and stay after the

women are done working so that they can clean the plant and prepare the crabs for the next day.

Most of the women I interviewed told me they worked as *descarnadoras*, but a few interviewees had different roles. In Springville, workers told me that there are five or six women whose primary jobs are packaging and weighing meat. Claudia, who is a *descarnadora*, told me in an informal conversation that she thinks the bosses select women to work in packaging who are the slowest pickers or have the least production of crabmeat, who she thinks are usually the newest workers. She said these women are paid hourly, and usually work longer hours than the women who work as pickers. María Luisa, a Springville worker, told me that she used to work as a *descarnadora*, but had been reassigned to weighing the meat and packaging it. I interviewed her during a weekday evening visit to the plant, and noticed that she had arrived home from work an hour or two later than the other women. She told me that she leaves later than the other women, “Because until all of the other girls finish picking, I have to weigh everything, we pack everything, and we clean up...” She also told me that she had no control over her assigned job role: “I used to [pick crab], but now they don’t let me... because I’m the one that weighs. The boss says, or the manager says, ‘You’re going to weigh,’ so I’m the one that weighs... *Ellos deciden* (they decide). They direct us.” This discussion indicates that workers have little autonomy over their jobs—bosses get the final say over who gets to work *descarnando* (picking) and who will work in support roles.

Claudia, another Springville worker, told me that sometimes, when there is a lot of crab, their boss will assign all of them to work on packaging. It just depends what the crab yield is. Women in Riverview all take turns working “*por horas*” (hourly) in these support

roles. When I asked Leticia, a Riverview *descarnadora*, whether she ever worked packaging or doing other jobs, she explained, “Yes, when they tap us for extra hours, or we have a ‘roll,’ there that when there’s a lot of work, they take us out to work hourly.”

Non-picking jobs or picking for an hourly rate can be safeguards for women who don’t pick fast enough to make “production.” Crab picking requires experience and swift adeptness to pick meat quickly enough to maximize one’s earnings, since workers are paid per pound. This is a struggle for women who come in without prior experience. Carol, a former H-2B worker who had worked in a different North Carolina plant, told me that her first year she worked picking but the second year she moved into packaging, paid hourly, which she preferred because she couldn’t pick fast enough to benefit from the piecemeal earning system:

... When you're picking the crabs, if you don't make production then you get paid by the hour, minimum wage. And the other part [other jobs] you do minimum wage too. And when you're doing the picking, if you are fast enough, you can make more money. 'Cause you make production. But I wasn't that good. I always got paid minimum 'cause I would not make enough.

Moving into support roles or earning hourly may be a good strategy to keep the job, but women generally expressed opinion that picking crabmeat piecemeal offered the highest earnings potential, because they are paid per pound, rather than per hour. By earning per pound, rather than hourly, workers have some control over how much they make. Victoria told me, “As *descarnadoras*, the faster we work, the more we earn. If I don’t hurry, I earn less.” Hourly workers, who are paid minimum wage, usually have to work longer hours to earn the same amount. Maribel told me, “If they pick you to work hourly, you get out of work later... like at 5:30 or 6. And if one works *descarnando*, we’re already home by 3:30.” As I will discuss later, although women prefer earning piecemeal, this

earnings system is precarious. Getting paid per pound of meat picked is not lucrative when crab flows are low and there is not enough meat to pick in the first place.

Regardless of their specific job function, the women refer to themselves as *jaiberas* (crab workers). It's important to note here that the "-a" ending in Spanish indicates a feminine noun or adjective ("-o" endings are masculine). When I asked Verónica why women are preferred for these jobs, she told me, "I don't know, on what it consists. But you say *jaibera*. If they said *jaiberos*, well they'd be men. But we're *jaiberas*. So they have to be women. So... like the *ostioneros* (oyster workers), the *ostioneros* don't bring women. They're men." This linguistic description reinforces the identity of a crab worker as a feminine one. Femininity is implicit in the women's conception of why they are preferred for the jobs over men, as well as why they are not apt for the men's jobs. As they see it, they are cleaner, hairless, and more responsible: traits that they see as critical for success in the job.

When I asked Ana why she thought employers preferred women for these jobs, she told me, "Men have a lot of hair on their arms, things like that. So it has a lot to do with hygiene, cleanliness. The [crab] meat has to be very clean, so men have their beard and... no. It's not apt for crab picking." Maribel seemed to think that men had a bad track record in the industry (some of the Riverview workers told me that there used to be a few male crab pickers) and that women were more responsible, which she attributed, in part, to their roles as mothers:

Well, they used to bring men but not anymore. Women are more responsible for the job... This is what I think. Men are more disposed to vice and they drink. All of the women have their children, to whom they send money, so what they want is to work to send [money] to their families, a little bit of money so that they can survive there [in Mexico].

Elba, a former crab worker, similarly explained, “I think it’s patience. Patience and a lot of dedication. And men, it’s that they’re more restless... men are more active, more restless. This is what I think. It’s a question of taste.”

Although women frame themselves as neater, cleaner, and morally superior to men, they also seem themselves as physically weaker, which is the primary reason they tell me that they do not perform the duties that men do. When I asked Carol why she thought employers prefer women pickers, she told me that women were faster, and employers relied on men for jobs that required physical strength:

'Cause, um, they [women] work faster than the men doing that kind of stuff. They usually get the men to do the harder work, like, the heavy [work] like carrying the crabs and cooking them because they have to push carts that weigh 1 or 2 tons, heavy, and, [they] have to push them and put them in the oven and take them out. All the hard stuff, like driving forklifts and that kind of stuff. They prefer men for that kind of stuff.

While most women don’t deny that they *could* do the same jobs as men, they explain it would be more difficult for them than men, or that men are better suited for those jobs, as we see with Verónica’s narrative at the beginning of this section. Ana told me that the men’s jobs are “*trabajos más pesados* (heavier jobs). There are a lot of jobs that a woman yes can do it, but it’s not the same for a woman as for a man. Because of this it’s better for the men.” Isabela expressed that gendered work abilities were innate: “Sometimes men are more qualified for a different type of work. A woman is always more fragile than a man, although we always say that we, if we take a risk to do something, heavy jobs—yes [we can do it]. But I think that we [women] are chosen to pick crab.” On its surface, picking crabs does not seem particularly suited to one gender or another—yet women’s linguistic framing of the work, the social construction of the job based on gendered characteristics,

and the physical “limitations” that women think they have all reinforce it as “women’s work.”

*Job outcomes: earnings and English*

Women and men in Springville told me that male workers had opportunities to work in jobs outside the plant on weekends. For example, Claudia migrated to Springville with her husband, who also works at the plant. When we spoke on a Sunday morning, she told me that her husband was not home because he was out painting boats. When I came back two weeks later, he was out painting boats again. I asked her about this, and she told me that if there isn’t enough crab to process, the plant owners have the men do painting or other work on the weekends, but that women are not offered this extra work. Migrating with her husband was beneficial, she explained, “Because one earns more. Like right now, there’s not a lot of work, and he is working. And if I don’t work, he does. So that way we have enough. So it’s better that we’re both here.” However, most women did not have husbands working at the plant—their husbands were back in Mexico. Therefore, they were unable to benefit from this gendered earning scheme. Eduardo, a Springville employee, offered his perspective on these gendered work opportunities:

There are occasions that [the women] want to do what we men are doing, but they can’t. When they aren’t working, the boss gives us work in [a nearby town]... painting boats. You have to climb up these towers that are very high, and well, I don’t think the women want to climb up there, so they have to stay here until there’s work.

If there’s no crab to process, women have no option but to wait for more work to arrive and earn nothing in the meantime. Men, however, are given extra jobs that allow them to keep earning even during shortages. Both male female employees attribute this to women’s inability or unwillingness to perform this more physical labor, like Eduardo explains above. When I returned to Springville during the 2013 season, workers told me



that there was very little work, and no crab to pick. Laura and her sister Marta told me that instead the women had been working de-heading shrimp or cleaning crab shells this season, and some days they had no work at all. Laura explained that the men still performed the same support roles that they did with crab: “When we are working...the men come work with us too. They serve us the shrimp, they’re the ones that pack it and everything.” But, when there was no shrimp, “the boss has a *rancho* and he takes them to work there,” washing his horses.

J: When we aren’t working, and there are days that we don’t work at all, we spend the day here in the house.

H: And if there’s no work in shrimp, the men always go work with the horses?

L: Yes.

H: But you [the women] don’t have this option to work at the farm?

L: No, us women no. If it’s not *concha* (crab shell), crab, or shrimp, no.

H: Do you know why the men have these options to work at the farm when there’s no work and you don’t?

L: Well I imagine because the men can... it’s more *pesado* (heavy) the work there, because they work in the sun.

H: In the sun?

L: Yes, well they work outside washing everything and we [women] can’t do what they do. That work is more *pesado*.

The female pickers who earn piecemeal may be at an earning advantage when crab flows are high, compared to hourly workers. However, when there is not enough seafood to process, there is little opportunity to earn. Men, on the other hand, men are given extra opportunities outside of seafood processing which circumvent the consequences of work shortages, and are therefore less vulnerable to the fluctuation of crab flows than women. H-2B workers are particularly vulnerable to work shortages because they are tied to a single employer and therefore cannot (legally) seek other work opportunities, as Rosalia explained: “...one signs a contract when you arrive here and you can’t change... we are committed with our boss, we can’t leave and look [for work] in other places.” In addition, Springville workers told me they couldn’t easily leave and go back to Mexico, because they

are in debt to their employers for the journey to North Carolina, and also wouldn't be able to afford the plane ticket home. While they are here, they must also continue to pay rent to their employers, regardless of whether or not they are working.

Women from both plants told me that the men at the plant earned more than the women, because men worked more hours. I noticed these different work schedules during weekday visits in Springville. For example, when I visited one Tuesday evening, the men arrived home a couple of hours later than the women. Workers explained that the men work later than the women because they clean the plant and cook the crab for the next day. Women told me during interviews that the men work more hours than they do, which they associated with men earning hourly while women earn per pound of crabmeat produced. In other words, men's earnings are quantitative, so it's in their interest to work long hours, while women's are qualitative, so they do better by picking faster. For example, when I asked Daniela how work experiences differed for women and men, she told me:

Well yes it's different because the men have to stay awake a lot here and the women don't. The men work more hours and we don't. It's always more tiring for a man. We get tired a lot because *nos tiramos a matar* (we shoot to kill) to work faster and faster so there are more pounds and the men no, the men work *por hora* (hourly). But also they're more hours that the men work than us. It could be that it is more difficult for the men here.

During my interview with Ana, in Riverview, I asked her if she knew how much the men earned hourly, she said, "No. And they don't tell us." At this point, another woman interjected: "The men earn more. Because they enter early, they leave late, work Saturdays... they have a lot of hours." Rosalia told me "Yes, they [the men] earn more. When there's a lot of work, they earn a lot..." Although she indicated that the male workers were also earning less than usual in the 2013 season because there wasn't enough crab, they still made out better than the women: "They're earning little, just like us women, but a little more. We [women] are the ones that earn less. The men earn a little more." Although

women may have more opportunities to enter U.S. crab processing jobs and hold the core jobs of crab picking, their accounts indicate that men's peripheral jobs pay more. However, no women indicated to me that they wanted men's jobs. They accepted a gendered division of labor not only because of employers' designations of men and women to certain roles, but because they felt certain crab jobs were innately masculine, while picking was suited to femininity.

Gendered job outcomes also extended beyond earnings, to English language acquisition. Scholars have found that the "language of work" often depends on the ethnic makeup of work crews, which is heavily influenced by network recruitment. Waldinger and Lichter (2003) found that in industries where jobs are dominated by Spanish-speaking migrants, it is unnecessary for immigrant workers to learn English. Women at the plants tend to work with almost all Mexicans, and therefore learn very little or no English. Isabela told me that the crab pickers in Riverview were all Mexican, except for one African American woman—and this woman, in fact, had learned some Spanish so that she could make small talk with her Mexican co-workers. Isabela recounted:

...There's only one black woman that still works here, and I taught her to say "*Buenos días*," and "*¿cómo estás?*"... And now she says, "*Está lloviendo*." (it's raining)... Now she knows what 'lluvia' (rain) is, she knows what 'hot' is, things like that.

Male workers, on the other hand, interact with more American workers, and therefore seem to have more exposure to English than the women. Claudia, for instance, told me that her husband spoke more English than she did, because he had the opportunity to work with Americans when he went to paint boats. This gives men an opportunity to communicate with their non-Spanish speaking bosses that women don't have. Maricela, who has worked in the United States for 20 years, told me that she didn't speak much

English, but that her male co-workers did because they work more directly with Americans:

... We don't learn [English] because all of us women are Mexican. The men, they know more, there are some that know more. Because they work directly with Americans, so they learn more... [The men] have more ways to talk with the Americans, including with the boss's son... they have more connections with the Americans than we women do. Or it facilitates English. For example, they [bosses] give us instructions in English. Sometimes they have to talk directly with the higher manager and they only speak English.

Nearly all of the women told me, often laughing in a way that indicated embarrassment, that they had not learned any English or not very much, because they didn't have the opportunity to use it. As Maricela indicated, when women did need to communicate with their bosses at the Springville plant, they relied on the male Mexican employees, who picked up English because they worked more directly with Americans, including their boss. Female employees in Riverview also told me that they relied on men who spoke English.

This came up with Leticia, in Riverview, when I asked how workers access healthcare:

H: What do you do if you need to go to the doctor?

L: We talk to the boss or the managers. The men that speak English, they find us transportation. Thank God we try to be in the best shape when we come so we don't have to face that. Until now, thank God, we haven't had the necessity. But yes, if there's an illness...

H: The men speak more English?

S: No, well they speak Spanish, but when they have to speak English they can speak. There are some that speak English very well, and others that just understand it.

H: Do the men have more opportunities to speak English?

S: Yes, they learn more. They're more intelligent. They have fewer problems than us women. They have a clearer mind, because us women... (laughs)

Unlike Maricela, who recognized that the men in her plant spoke more English because they had more interaction than Americans, Leticia attributed this to what she thought of as men's superior intellectual ability.

Although the *jaiberas* don't need to use English in their jobs, there are long-term consequences for immigrants with low or no English proficiency. The U.S. naturalization process requires an English test, and proposed immigration reform would require migrants to learn English in order to become citizens (New York Times 2013). Although the current

H-2B program does not offer a pathway to citizenship, the new proposed “W” visa for low-skilled, non-agricultural workers would. The workers in Springville are restricted to working in the crab plant, where English is unnecessary, but should they decide to settle out of H-2B and find other work, English ability is important for access to higher-wage jobs. For example, Cobb-Clark and Kossoudji (2000) found that English proficiency significantly increased wages in initial jobs for undocumented female workers and was related to workers’ ability to move out of “traditional” occupations, which tend to be poorly paid, marginal, and difficult. Arguably, hiring workers who do not speak the local language may also be a form of social control. It creates conditions under which women are not only more reliant upon the men who speak English in the plant, but also more vulnerable to their employers.

Crab processing jobs are gendered both in the United States and in Mexico: the majority of crab pickers are women, and men fill most of the “support” jobs in both countries. However, many workers told me that the gendering of jobs is much more pronounced in the United States. There are some male crab pickers in Mexico, as Rosalia explained: “In Mexico, women also work in crab picking, but there are men that work too.... There, it’s not all women. There are men who pick... They’re really good at picking, too. They yield a lot [of meat].” This indicates that the gendering of work cannot be attributed to innate biological differences that make men inferior pickers. Rather, my data, along with a large body of scholarship on gendered work, indicates that the gendered segregation of jobs is a social construction.

## COMING AND GOING: MAINTAINING MOTHERHOOD IDENTITY ACROSS BORDERS

*One spends more time here than there. We're here for seven months. It's a long time.*

--Teresa, 56, Springville

The seven to eight months spent apart from children and other family in Mexico each year is a difficult and salient part of the guestworkers' U.S. experience, and the responsibilities and expectations of motherhood hold them in a liminal position in the United States. Ernestine Avila and Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo (1997) aptly capture this tension in the title of their article on Latina transnational motherhood among undocumented women working as domestics in the United States: "I'm Here but I'm There." Like the domestics in Avila and Hondagneu-Sotelo's study (see also Parreñas 2001), the women in Riverview and Springville face pressure to remain in the United States to provide financial support to their children. However, unlike undocumented domestics who *cannot* return home, the *jaiberas* return home every year to resume their traditional roles of providing direct care to their children, at least for a few months. The seasonal nature of their work and perpetual returns home maintain strong emotional attachment and moral pressures that prevent them from remaining permanently—in most cases, the desire to return home to family deters women from staying in the United States beyond the eight months of the year they are employed by the crab plant. These women, therefore, not only live temporarily in the United States, but also in their home country. They can't stay in Mexico because they must support their families financially, but neither can they stay in the United States, because their families are in Mexico. This tension of living temporarily in two worlds became apparent in my interview with Juana. She had been telling me how her daughter received a college degree, but was having a very difficult time finding work in

Mexico. When I asked her whether her daughter had ever thought about working alongside her mother in Springville, she responded:

No. She says that it's *muy pesado* (very heavy). She doesn't see a future in coming and going. She doesn't see a future there. To come [to the U.S.] is to be going and coming. She says, "There's no future because you're six months here and six months there. What a joke that is. Where are you going to make your life—here or there?" *Tiene razón* (She's got a point). She's completely right because well, where is the future located for us? Coming and going? For the rest of our lives? Until we can't? Or until they stop bringing us?

Juana's account highlights the contradiction seasonal labor migrants face while spending long periods of time in a foreign country, in order to support a life in one's home country.

### *Leaving Children Behind and Complicating "Traditional" Gender Roles*

Many of the women I interviewed have been migrating for many years—sometimes decades. Their average number of years working was about 13. Of 20 current *jaiberas*, 13 had been working here for at least 10 years, and five had been working for 20 years or more. In other words, family separation has been a problem that my interviewees have been coping with not just for one season, but for many years. With the exception of one woman, all had children. A few women waited to migrate until their children were older, or took a break in employment when their children were very small, but many women migrated when their children were very young. In their absence, these women left their children and home in the care of female kin, elder daughters, and husbands—who were not used to changing diapers or mopping floors.

Female kin were especially important for single mothers, who did not have husbands to rely on to take care of their children. Because fathers are not mandated to pay child support in Mexico, single mothers regularly depend on their own mothers, sisters, a mother-in-law, or older daughter to care for their children. For example, Verónica, whose husband left when her two children were 11 and 9 years old, relies on her mother to care

for her children while she is away: “She is my strong arm, because what would I do if I didn’t have her? I couldn’t come [to the United States], because of my children. Who would I leave them with? Better than anything, it’s best that she takes care of them. There’s no one else besides her.” Accounts like Verónica’s indicate that the female kin in Mexico make it possible for single mothers to migrate to the United States. In addition to caring for her children, Verónica’s mother manages the remittances she sends home: “What I earn, I send to her, and I tell her, ‘You know what you need. You administer it.’ And thank God we’ve made it work.”

Married women typically had husbands remaining in Mexico to care for children. Women expressed that learning to care for young children and do housework challenged their husbands’ typical household roles. Most women indicated that when both spouses were at home, they subscribed to traditional gender roles: men responsible for working outside the home, and women responsible for the home and children (even though they too usually worked outside the house). Victoria first started migrating when her youngest daughter was one year old, and her husband’s new responsibilities as the caregiver for a baby were challenging.

The first time I came, [my husband] said that at night when I didn’t come back, he found it really hard. Because he remembered that I wasn’t there and he didn’t know how to take care of the children, because he hardly ever did it. Because he dedicated himself to work and I took care of them. For him it was really difficult, but he adapted too, because he has a lot of patience. My little girl, I left her when she was one year old... He had to learn to change her diapers, to bathe her... And so for him it was a drastic change: washing slab floors, putting clothes in the washing machine. But he realized that the first year, I didn’t do a lot, but I built one room [in the house], and the next year another room. Every year when I come I put new furniture in the house, I pay for my children’s studies, I do something in my house...

Victoria’s absence forced her husband to take on household roles he was previously unaccustomed to doing, but he reconciled these changing roles with the home improvements and other financial support Victoria was able to provide through her U.S.



earnings. Victoria later told me that until last year, she would resume housework responsibilities during her seasonal return. However, last winter when she returned, her husband began helping her: “He told me, ‘When I’m here by myself I do it, so when my wife is here, why not help her?’ And yes, he helps me now.” Her account indicates that over time, some men may grow more accepting of women’s roles as primary earners, and become more willing to do the housework previously considered to be only a woman’s role. Victoria thinks that women actually have an advantage over men when they migrate, because they’re used to working both inside and outside the home, which they must do both in Mexico and in the United States:

... For men it’s more difficult to come, because the man who doesn’t know how to cook—it’s going to be hard for him. He has to adapt; that’s the difference. One as a woman knows how to cook, and the chores you do in Mexico are the same that you do here, and we work too. In this respect, it’s not difficult for us women, because here we cook, we make tortillas, wash, clean the house... and in Mexico too. And we also work [there].

In other words, working women are used to doing the “second shift,” (Hochschild 1989) while men are not. In addition, because these men usually continue to work outside the home in Mexico, some women told me that their older daughters stepped in to help run the household, to varying degrees. For example, when Teresa’s children were young, her oldest daughter was left in charge of the house when she was only 13:

A daughter of mine, a 13-year old kid, was the one who took care of [the other children]... It was really hard for her, and for me, because one comes here and you know that they’re little, and well, they don’t have anyone else to care for them besides their father—but their dad was working all day. He was only with them at night... She did everything in the house.

Daughters were often expected to take care of cooking, cleaning, and other housework while their fathers were at work. Therefore, women’s absences not only impact adult family members who care for the children, but also the roles of children themselves.

The men I interviewed told me that their wives did not work outside the home in Mexico. Instead, their wives dedicated themselves to caring for their children, while the men were the ones responsible for providing financially for the family. Jorge, for instance, explained that his wife “is in charge” of decisions related to their handicapped daughter: “She’s the one that takes her to appointments, [helps] with her studies, she’s the one that’s running around in circles. And I dedicate myself to working.” Eduardo told me that his wife used to work in Mexico, but that he ordered her to stop when he felt she wasn’t fulfilling her obligations as a mother. When I asked him whether his wife worked, he told me:

No. She takes care of my daughter. She worked for a while, but... she wasn’t taking care of the children. And I didn’t like that. I said, “Stop working, because my children come first before work. And what I earn, I think that it will be enough for you to support them.”

When men migrate, they too, face emotional difficulties of family separation, which both Jorge and Eduardo expressed to me. However, migration does not conflict with their roles as husbands and fathers—in fact, it allows them to fulfill their masculine duty of providing financially for their families. When men migrate, their wives also remain in the traditional gendered arrangement of caring for their children and homes (although we know that some women who stay behind gain autonomy in their husbands’ absence—see Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992). When women migrate, it complicates the gendered division of labor in families. Women become primary breadwinners and, at least for three-quarters of the year, are unable to provide direct care for their children and homes. Their husbands must take on some childcare, cooking, and cleaning responsibilities that are usually part of their wives’ domain. However, unlike Eduardo and Enrique’s wives, the *jaiberas*’ husbands were not expected to opt out of the paid labor force. Instead, they rely on their daughters to help out with childcare and housework. Therefore, it is not only men who enable women with

children to migrate, but also their female kin who stay behind—especially in the case of single mothers.

### *Making Sacrifices: Negotiating Family Separation*

When I asked women what their experiences were like when they first arrived in the United States, the most common theme that came up was the difficulty of leaving behind their children. Many told me that over time, they got used to being away from home and to their work and life in the United States, but even after several years, they suffered because they missed their families. Despite the difficulties that migration presents, however, women felt that working in the United States was necessary for their children's well being, as Claudia indicates:

The first year that I came I suffered a lot, because I had never left my children. And when I came here it was really hard, really difficult that I left them. My daughter was 9 years old, my other daughter was 15, and my son was about 18... But one comes here because back home there's hardly any work. And the people who do work, well they hardly pay them anything, it's not enough for anything. That's why one comes. But time passes, and one gets used to being here. You start getting used to the idea of being far from your children. But yes, one suffers a lot.

Although women migrate to help their children get ahead, their prolonged absences over several years leave mothers with feelings of guilt. They are unable to provide the care and support to their children that they feel is their motherly duty, and miss out on formative years and experiences. Isabela, who has been migrating to work in Riverview for 10 years, told me that she feels that she has missed out on her children's formative years. Through tears, she told me:

It's always difficult. Because... you could say that, even though your children have grown, you didn't have the opportunity to enjoy them. I lost one son to drugs. My daughters married. I couldn't enjoy them during their single years and... it's been difficult. It's very difficult.

During an informal conversation on another day, Isabela told me more about her son's drug problems, and that she was worried about him because the last time she saw him in Mexico

he was very thin. She told me this made her feel guilty--she feels somewhat responsible for his drug use because she was absent while he was growing up. Victoria also expressed guilt for leaving her family behind, not only for her children's, but for leaving her husband with household responsibilities:

[When I first came], my son who's 15 now was seven years old. And he tells me, "Ay Ma, you spend more time there [in the United States] than you do here [in Mexico]." ... I feel like our children are the most valuable thing we women have, and we leave them. And it's a great sacrifice to leave them and the responsibility to their father. And a lot of times it's difficult for the father too, because he has to get up early, he has to get their uniforms ready, make them breakfast and send them to school, take them to the doctor if they get sick... it's something difficult. One suffers.

Even though women reconcile their absence with the financial support it allows them to provide, they feel that it conflicts with their roles as mothers. Victoria feels bad about her husband getting up early to get their children ready for school, because she feels that this is *her* responsibility as a mother.

Contemporary technology facilitates transnational linkages that allow women to stay linked to their families even while they are away: workers maintain ties to their families through regular communication via cell phones. Most women in the plants own cell phones and purchase phone cards from Mexican *tiendas* in nearby cities, so that they can call home regularly, as well as send text messages to stay in touch. This allows them to stay abreast of the daily experiences of their family members, from quotidian matters like knowing what the weather is in Sinaloa to providing parental guidance and making household decisions across borders. Several women talk with their families every day, and often multiple times a day through text messages, depending on the availability of phone cards. For example, Cristina, a mother of four, told me that the way she and her husband make household decisions does not change much while she is abroad: "It's not very different, because since one is calling home almost daily, for example, one calls and they tell

you something, or they ask you a question, and then you come to an agreement. It's that we talk almost daily. It's as if one were back in Mexico." Ana told me that when her husband was sick recently, she was able to stay in touch with him until he recovered. Victoria stays engaged with her children's daily lives through her multiple phone calls throughout the course of her day:

I call home every day... My daughters send me [text] messages every day: "Mamá, how did you sleep?" ... I answer them and when I go to work, when I leave for a lunch break, I call them for 4 or 5 minutes. "How are you, how did you sleep, have you eaten yet?" And they tell me "we're fine," and things like that. When I leave work in the afternoon... I call home and we talk, "How are you? How was school? Did you clean the house?" Or sometimes my daughter says, "Hey Mom, I want to make this recipe. Tell us how." And I tell her... or "Go visit your grandmother, how is she doing?" Like that.

Despite her absence, she is able to maintain strong ties to her children through quotidian interactions, providing advice, checking in on their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their home and extended family. She also talks to her husband, with whom she makes decisions about the children, and insists that he keeps her informed of what goes on at home:

I tell my husband, 'Look *tell me everything* that happens at home, don't hide anything from me, because if you hide something from me, when I come back, I don't want other people telling me what happened. You all have to tell me so that I know, so that I know what we're going to do.' [He tells me], "ok, yes that's fine." And in this we've always been in agreement. (Respondent's emphasis)

Victoria's narrative shows that although she is far from home, she is able to stay in tune with her family, talk with them multiple times a day, discuss parental strategies with her husband, and provide advice and discipline to her children, all over the phone. Her transnational ties overcome spatial distance and allow her to fulfill, to some extent, her role as a mother from a distance.

Women's regular return home to Mexico also maintains relationships that strengthen emotional ties to the sending community and families, and eases women's guilt about their seasonal absences. Leticia, for example, seemed torn between her prospects for earning in the United States and her desire to be with her children, but seemed to settle at

the compromise that at least she could see her children during her seasonal return to Mexico each year: “[Living here] is okay because we come to work, we come to earn, but I’d like to be there [in Mexico] because of my children. But it’s okay here, it’s only a time, seven months, and then at seven months our boss tells us that we can pick a date to go home.” Knowing that they will return home at the end of each season gives workers some consolation, as well as something to look forward to.

### *Transnational Family Ties and Attitudes toward Permanent Settlement*

Studies of immigrant families in the United States have found that wives, more than husbands, lead in permanent settlement by seeking the public services and financial support that allow them to stay (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994) and making household investments that anchor families to the United States (Grasmuck and Pessar 1991). These studies involved cases where both husbands and wives are already living in the United States. The circumstances for women in transnational families, however, are very different.

In Rhacel Parreñas’ (2011) study of Filipina hostesses in Japan, she notes that not all labor migrants seek permanent settlement. Rather, the temporary workers she studied maintained an orientation toward their home country. Like Parreñas, I find that many women have not sought, nor do they intend to seek permanent settlement in the United States. Because of their ties and obligations to husbands and especially children in Mexico, U.S. settlement is not realistic. This is not to say women never stay—they do. Although there is no legal path to settlement with an H-2B visa, some workers find a path to U.S. settlement by overstaying their visas, as indicated by interviews with two former workers who have overstayed and from women’s accounts of colleagues who have stayed. However, this data indicates that those who stay come under very different circumstances: often,

they arrive single and without children. Workers with children in Mexico, on the other hand, had little desire to spend time in the United States beyond the months they were contracted to work, and most indicated that when they retire from the work, they plan to return to Mexico permanently.

I asked Juana, who has extended family in Texas and New Mexico if she had ever thought about staying in the United States permanently. For her, it was not an option: “No. I don’t like to live here... Because to stay here I would be without my children. No. It’s a long time to leave them alone and then to stay... No. I’ve never thought about it. It’s never crossed my mind.” Juana’s account shows that not only is settlement not appealing for these women, but it is not even considered as an option. Isabela, whose husband, four children, and six grandchildren all live in Mexico, explains that even though she migrates to the United States seasonally, she would never do so permanently:

No, because my family is there. I can’t leave my family. I leave them for months, but no. Because of them—no, no. And because I’ve always said that the United States is a nice country, it’s a very nice country, I don’t have anything to complain about because it’s all fine, but what happens is that here you live alone and there, well, your family is there [in Mexico].

Her account makes it clear that her disinterest in U.S. settlement is not because of her feelings about the country itself, which she speaks about positively (“a very nice country”), but about family separation. In this sense, guestworker programs have succeeded from a policy perspective. By separating spheres of production from household reproduction, workers maintain an orientation toward their home country.

Attitudes toward settlement are not only impacted by these family ties, but also lack of access to networks, resources, and information that would allow them to stay. Some workers do have social ties outside the plant—Veronica for instance, has a Mexican boyfriend who lives in a nearby town. However, most workers I spoke with spend most of

their time only with other *jaiberas*, do not learn English, and do not have access to social networks outside of their contracted coworkers. When I asked workers about their interactions with people outside of the plant, most workers (from both plants) gave me responses similar to Laura's: "Since we don't go out anywhere, we don't know anyone." So while workers rely on social networks to get crab jobs in the United States, these networks usually do not extend outside the crab plant.

The social isolation of H-2B workers is not limited only to the crab processing industry. For example, Katharine Donato et al.'s (2005) study of migrant laborers in the Louisiana oil industry found that H-2B workers were much more socially removed from their receiving community than undocumented workers in the same industry. They propose that government policies intensify employer control over migrants and "undercut the formation of a stable migrant community" (72). Unable to obtain alternative employment or housing, the workers remained invisible to the rest of the community. Isolation is also a problem for workers outside the H-2B program. Jacqueline Hagan (1998) found that Maya domestic workers in Houston tended to be confined to employers' homes and neighborhoods, giving them little opportunity to interact with both coethnics and non-coethnics. This led them to become dependent on their bosses, and therefore more vulnerable in their employment situations. Several immigration scholars have found that "weak ties" (Granovetter 1973) with non-coethnics and community institutions are crucial for migrants' social and economic incorporation. Connections with non-immigrant coworkers (Hagan 1998), ethnic churches and other community organizations provide immigrants with advocacy, resources, and assistance for integration and settlement (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Menjivar 2006; Griffith 2008; Bada et al. 2010; López-Sanders



2012). In addition, permanent settlement often requires work that is stable and non-seasonal (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). The *jaiberas* work, however, is both seasonal and precarious, both within seasons and from year-to-year.

Women who do end up staying tend to come to the United States without family ties—young, unmarried, and without children back in Mexico. Women in these circumstances face fewer constraints to settlement and sometimes start families in the United States. For instance, Isabela told me about the situation of one of her former co-workers who married an American and settled in the United States: “For example, Maria is a co-worker who came to work in crab but she went to the meetings of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. It was there that that [she and her husband] met in a meeting.” Isabela then compared this to her own and other colleagues’ conditions as women with homes and families in Mexico: “Those of us here are here thanks to God and with the commitment of marriage, respecting this position, which my husband also has.” Women like Isabela have come to work in the United States with the understanding that they will return back to husbands and family in Mexico. These accounts demonstrate that social locations of the workers who settle in the United States are very different than those who remain temporary, non-immigrant guestworkers.

Carol and Elba are former H-2B workers who no longer work as *jaiberas*, and are permanent, legal residents of the United States. They came to work in the crab industry without the commitments that Isabela discusses. Like Isabela’s former colleague, their narratives provide insight into the ways marital and motherhood status, along with legal status, can either constrain or facilitate United States settlement. Elba came because she was interested in earning money, and had already spent several years working in

California, where she gained residency through her grandfather, who received amnesty through IRCA. She was not married and did not have children when she came to work in North Carolina. After a few months at the plant where she was contracted to work, she was unhappy with the conditions and decided to leave: "I told my boss, 'You know what? This job isn't for me... I don't want this life. I'm leaving here.' And after three months [my sister and I] saved to buy a car and to rent a little trailer and we came to [a new town]." They had heard about another crab plant from a Mexican man, and were able to secure jobs there. Elba liked her new boss and worked at the plant until it closed down in the late 1990s. At this point, Elba decided she would try opening her own business in North Carolina: "When they closed the plant, I said, 'Wow, I don't think I'll ever have bosses like this again. No... I'm going to open my own business.' And I opened a *tienda Mexicana* (Mexican store)." She later met a Mexican man and had two children with him.

Because she arrived in the United States as a permanent resident, Elba was not vulnerable to the constraints of the H-2B visa, and could leave her first job when she was unhappy. When the plant she worked for later closed down, she could stay legally and open her own business. Rather than feeling pressures to support a family in Mexico, Elba formed her family in the United States, and her sons are American citizens who have never lived in Mexico. She has no plans to go back: "I love it here. And people ask me, 'Why don't you go back to Mexico? Isn't life better there?' 'Noo,' I say, 'I would not take away the opportunity for my children to study here.' ...As long as I can stay here, I'll be here." Unlike the *jaiberas* whose children keep them oriented toward Mexico, Elba's children keep her anchored in the United States.

Carol's circumstances also differ from those of the other *jaiberas*. She came to come work in North Carolina as a young university student. She was not married, had no children to support, and, in fact, told me that her primary objective was not to earn money to send her family, but to learn English:

... At the time, at the school where I enrolled, they had like a new requirement to graduate that you had to speak from 75-80% of a second language in order to graduate. So I said, well, I'm going to go there 6 months, study English really hard, come back, and finish the career. And then I stayed here (chuckling).

Carol told me she was satisfied for the first two years she worked in the plant, that her boss treated the workers well, and that she was able to learn English by studying and watching American TV—in fact, hers was the only interview conducted fully in English. However, this plant closed down, and Carol was contracted to work in Springville (together with her sister) the following year. During her first month in Springville, she told me there was no work, that workers' living conditions were reprehensible, and that they were overcharged for their transportation and visas:

I remember the house that we got in Springville... I think he don't uses that anymore, he bought a school or something... I remember the room, it was little, little. And we had like a small window probably like the size of [a computer] monitor, maybe a little bit bigger... And the bed, I remember my bed sheet it was all wore out. You could see through the material. It had a huge hole. And through the hole you could see like a bloodstain. And I was like to my sister "Ohhh shit, I don't want to sleep *here!*" ... [the bathrooms] were dirty... I tell you I just held on for a month and I left. When I finally said "I'm gone!" was when they came and gave us the prices of the stuff that we had to pay. The transportation and the visas and all that stuff. When I saw those prices, they inflated so much! Because one year before, I did all that<sup>9</sup>, so I knew the price of everything... To me it wasn't worth it and I left.

Carol decided to break her contract and strike out on her own, leaving the H-2B program to become undocumented. She got a job through Steve, an American man she met who was visiting other Springville workers: "One time I got there to his car, and I was already having all these problems, and I said, "Look, do you know, where can I go and work?" And he said,

---

<sup>9</sup> Carol worked as a recruiter for her previous boss and was responsible for arranging transportation and documents for the other workers.

"They're asking for people at [a factory] in [a nearby town]."

While Carol's sister stayed for the season Springville, and then went back to Mexico permanently to be with her children, Carol left the plant, got the factory job, and eventually ended up marrying Steve. After working her way up at the factory job, Carol held sales jobs, and later opened her own financial services business, which caters to the local Latina/o community. She hopes to finish a 4-year degree in North Carolina and become a CPA. Carol had already gained U.S. citizenship by the time she separated from Steve (they were unable to have children). While her relationship with her family in Mexico remains very important to her, and she visits regularly with her mother and sisters, she is satisfied to stay in the United States. "I like it here, because I can do less for what I've got. To have the same things over there [in Mexico] I'd have to work more."

The accounts of the *jaiberas* and former *jaiberas* demonstrate the ways that gendered family arrangements influence women's experiences working in the United States and settlement intentions, and also the ways women's migration, in turn, influences household arrangements. However, while some men may become more involved in housework while their wives become primary breadwinners, women's status as wives and mothers are salient factors in determining the extent to which they incorporate in the United States. Women who come while single and/or without children may have opportunities to leave jobs where they're unhappy, find new jobs in other cities, and form families in the United States. On the other hand, women who make commitments to return home to their families in Mexico occupy a liminal position in the United States. Although they spend three-quarters of many years working there, they have few intentions to stay, and instead stay oriented toward family in Mexico.

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This thesis contributes to the literature on female labor migration and raises important policy concerns during the United States government's current efforts to develop comprehensive immigration reform. At the theoretical level, my findings contribute to the literature on migration decision-making, recruitment, gendered jobs, transnational family relationships, and contexts of settlement.

I find that *jaiberas* enter into migration as a household decision, and that decisions are mediated through men: both via spousal permission, or men's inability or unwillingness to provide financial security. While the new economics of labor migration theory views migration as a rational economic decision for households, I argue that this theory should also take into account gendered power dynamics within households. Although decisions occur at a household level, this does not mean that they are egalitarian among household members.

I also find that *jaiberas'* migration decisions are also shaped by the complementarity of labor markets at home and abroad. Women work at seafood processing plants in Sinaloa, Mexico in order to get the requisite experience to work for similar plants in the Southeast U.S. By recruiting in Sinaloa, U.S. employers benefit from hiring workers who have already been trained. Because immigrant laborers have "dual frames of reference" (Waldinger and Lichter 2003), U.S. job opportunities are evaluated relative to labor markets in Mexico. The poor employment prospects in Sinaloa's small agricultural communities make U.S. crab work an attractive option for women. Working as a *jaibera* in the United States pays better wages and has better working conditions than agricultural jobs, and the seasonal nature of crab picking work complements the agricultural and fishing seasons in Mexico.

The entry of female crab pickers into the U.S. labor market is induced by employer recruitment, which is facilitated through the federal H-2B program. Over time, formal recruitment in Mexican crab plants has given way to less formal recruitment through personal social networks. As Fred Krissman (2005) argues in his call for an “international migration network” approach, I find that the decision to migrate is shaped not only by hometown actors, but is also induced by actors in the receiving country, including employers and the state.

My findings also contribute to the literature on the labor force incorporation of women from the global South. Crab picking jobs are gendered both in Mexico and in the United States, but women indicated that the gendered division of jobs was more pronounced in U.S. plants. Although crab picking is not “women’s work” in the traditional sense—i.e., does not involve emotional labor, and is in the food processing, rather than service industry—women internalize their jobs as being suited to their femininity. Women consider other job roles as masculine, and better suited for the men who perform them, even if they lose out financially from their exclusion from these jobs. Men in Springville have some opportunities to diversify their earnings with side jobs, such as painting boats on the weekend—opportunities that are not offered to women. Men are paid hourly, and women’s jobs are typically remunerated piecemeal, based on the amount of meat they can produce. The piecemeal earnings system is precarious for workers. It allows women to earn well when crab flows are high, but puts them at a disadvantage when there is not enough seafood to process.

I also discussed the ways female labor migrants negotiate motherhood and gendered family relations. Incorporation into seasonal U.S. jobs means that women must

negotiate financial support for their families with their physical absence for many months during the year. This absence contradicts women's internalized views of "good" motherhood and causes emotional strain, but it also challenges the traditional gendered division of labor in some women's households. As *jaiberas* become breadwinners, their husbands learn to negotiate childcare and household responsibilities.

Women's embeddedness in transnational families has implications for their interest and ability in remaining in the United States permanently. Compared to other transnational labor migrants, *jaiberas* return home often—at least for four months each year. For women with children, this maintains an orientation toward family in Mexico that proscribes interest in settlement. However, women without children who enter under the same legal contexts sometimes find pathways to settlement and form families in the United States. These comparisons demonstrate that legal, political, and family contexts matter.

Although female crab pickers are a unique group of labor migrants, the findings from this study are analytically generalizable and valuable to both scholars' and policymakers' understanding not only of guestworker streams, but of the role of family in migration and incorporation and the consequences of gendered work arrangements. Comparisons between *jaiberas*, former H-2B workers, and the literature on care workers demonstrate that work experiences and settlement intentions are embedded in family contexts and are shaped by political circumstances. Liminal legal status, isolated work environments, and transnational family structures hold women in between two worlds. In order to support their families in Mexico, *jaiberas* must leave them behind to work abroad. However, they have little or no mobility in either the U.S. labor market and few options and

incentives to incorporate into the community. They work to sustain a family with whom they spend only about one-quarter of each year—enough time to remain attached to their homes and sustain strong emotional ties, but not enough to fulfill their ideal roles as mothers and wives.

*Jaiberas* enter into U.S. labor migration under conditions of control that are arguably more rigid than even those faced by undocumented women. This control is institutional, through the limitations and weaknesses of the H-2B program; structural, in terms of their isolated jobs, piecemeal work, and inability to change employers; social, through gendered work arrangements; and cultural, through the obligations of marriage and motherhood in the family context.

Scholars who study gendered work arrangements consistently find that both employers and female workers explain women's concentration in certain occupational niches in agriculture and manufacturing because of sex differences that make women more adept at "detail work," which is often paid piecemeal. Raynolds' (2001) study of gendered jobs at a Dominican pineapple plantation found that men had the "heavy lifting" jobs of unloading bins and carrying cartons, while women were responsible for handling the fruit. One of the managers Raynolds interviewed explained, "[Women] handle the fruit with more care and are quicker and more discriminating." These workers were also paid piece rates, and their earnings were very inconsistent, depending on the fruit crops. Lourdes Azripe and Josefina Aranda (1981) studied a Mexican strawberry plant, where young, peasant women worked removing stems (also piecework) from the fruit. Managers of these plants said that women are preferred for dexterity and because they are "less restless" than men (455). However, the authors argue that employers hire these women is not because of



their manual dexterity, but because they are willing to work for low wages in jobs with inconsistent hours.

These studies consistently find that these physical attributions of women's dexterity mask the real reasons that they are recruited into these precarious, low-wage jobs with precarious earnings and relatively poor working conditions: they are in disadvantaged positions that leave them with few worthwhile alternatives and they are jobs that men prefer not to do. In the case of female crab workers, their liminal legal status as guestworkers makes them even more vulnerable. Interestingly, both crab picking and domestic jobs were previously filled by African-American women—another marginalized and historically disadvantaged group of women.

Migrant workers, and especially migrant women, are attractive to U.S. employers because they are willing to work for the lowest wages, and because they are more easily held under employer control than American employees would be (Espiritu 1997; Waters 1999; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; Waldinger and Lichter 2003; Griffith 2006). H-2 guestworkers live in total institutions (Goffman 1961): they are extremely dependent on their bosses for jobs, because their contracts tie them to a single employer, and they mostly rely on their bosses for housing and transportation. When crab flows are low and employers face profit loss, they are still able to collect rent from the women, who are only paid when they work, but must pay for their housing regardless of their earnings.

Workers do not have the vantage point of viewing their jobs as part of a system of sexism or inequality that benefits employers in capitalist societies. Rather, the women internalize their roles as being suited to their femininity. And in fact, in their individual experiences, the gendered nature of this job provides them with an advantage to join the

U.S. labor market that they would not otherwise have. The Sinaloa women in my study have entered this migration stream often in very poor economic circumstances and with few appealing employment alternatives. Given these conditions and constraints, crab-picking work in the United States is a favorable option. However, this employment opportunity comes at the cost of separation from their families, which is emotionally painful and contradicts with women's identities as good wives and mothers.

These findings are particularly relevant given current U.S. policy discussions surrounding guestworker programs. Current regulations for H-class temporary visas differ significantly by the skill level of the visa holder. While H-2B and H-2A (agricultural) workers are considered to be low skilled, the United States also offers the H-1B visa—a temporary visa for high skilled workers. H-1B visas are for jobs in “specialized occupations,” like engineering, science, mathematics, and business. Visa holders must have at least a bachelor's degree. H-1B visas are considered “dual intent” visas, meaning that although holders are considered “nonimmigrants,” like H-2 visa holders, they can also pursue permanent legal residence and apply for green cards (Geddes 2013)—which H-2 holders cannot. They can also bring their families to the United States with H-4 visas. In other words, in return for their specialized skills, in demand from U.S. employers, H-1B immigrants are given a pathway to full membership in this country.

There is no pathway to legal settlement for H-2B workers, who are brought in to fill low-wage, precarious “bad jobs” (Kalleberg 2011) that native-born workers are often unwilling to do. Low-skill guestworker programs have been designed to hire “temporary” labor, with nations benefitting from foreign labor without providing membership in return.

However, the demand for the labor is often anything but temporary—and even when the formal programs to bring workers end, employer demand keeps workers coming unauthorized, as in the case of the post-Bracero period.

Classifications like “low-skilled,” “temporary,” and “non-immigrant” seem inappropriate to describe the work and migration of women like Teresa, Juana, Miguelina, and others, who have been migrating for decades. These women spend significant periods of time working in the United States and away from their families in Mexico. Although they are Mexican emigrants, the United States does not recognize them as immigrants, but as non-permanent workers—guests in this nation, not residents. In addition, while these workers have low levels of education and their work is considered “unskilled,” there is employer demand for the jobs they perform, and they have years of experience and are adept at their particular job functions. As Ana proudly told me, “*Ya estamos expertas* (We’re experts now).” Scholars like Jacqueline Hagan (forthcoming) argue that we undervalue these “skills of the unskilled.” As long as American restaurants continue serving crab cakes with meat harvested in the Chesapeake Bay and the Pamlico Sound, (and as long as crab picking is not automated), the demand for this skilled labor will remain. And though it is indeed seasonal work, the “season” lasts two thirds of the year. In this context, the only part of this migration that seems temporary and seasonal is workers’ short return trips to Mexico each winter.

The women I interviewed understand the boundaries of their visas and have realistic expectations about their prospects to remain in the United States. Those who come untethered to men and children in Mexico may take chance to stay in the United States permanently, albeit undocumented, to form their families here. Some have the opportunity

to stay legally by marrying American citizens. However, U.S. settlement is unrealistic for women who have families waiting for them in Mexico and who have no legal options to bring them to the United States. In this sense, the regulations of this visa disadvantage the very people who follow the rules, while women like Carol, who took the risk to stay and break her contract, has been able to stay here, become a citizen, pursue higher education, and start her own business. Although women who have children in Mexico may have the most to gain from working in the United States—financial support for their families—single women potentially have more opportunities for permanent U.S. settlement, though it may be unauthorized.

Although some politically conservative actors, largely supported by corporate interests, support expanding guestworker programs, more liberal actors oppose them on the grounds of worker exploitation. In February 2013, the New York Times published an editorial<sup>10</sup> criticizing the political sphere's lack of attention to protections for migrant workers and argued that the current system for recruiting temporary workers needs reform: "The system that recruits legal temporary works is... a mess... it is crucial to avoid making the mess even bigger." They explain that because workers are tied to one employer, they are vulnerable and subject to exploitation: speaking out against poor working conditions can result in workers being "threatened, fired, deported, blacklisted. They have little opportunity to complain about unsafe working conditions, to sue for stolen wages or to assert their rights to overtime and time off." Violations of workers' rights are well documented among H-2B and H-2A workers, and advocacy groups like the National

---

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/21/opinion/immigration-reform-and-workers-rights.html>

Guestworkers Alliance have sprung up to support workers, help them organize, and advocate on their behalf.

The relative isolation of Springville and Riverview workers creates conditions under which they are vulnerable to such abuses. The factor that leaves them most vulnerable is that their contracts tie them to a single employer each season. If conditions are not good, or if they do not have enough work, they cannot leave and find a new workplace. Further, workers depend on these jobs to support their families, and they recognize that if they were to complain, they would lose the opportunity to work here. Some workers were very cautious about speaking to me until I assured them I had no connections with their supervisors. On one of my first trips to Springville to do interviews (at which point it was the only plant I'd studied), a woman asked which other plants I've been visiting, because she heard there were lawyers at another plant. Ana, in Riverview, expressed similar concern. When I read her my IRB consent script, which assures the confidentiality of participants' responses, she seemed relieved and told me that sometimes they have to be careful to talk to anyone in case the information gets back to their bosses. Overall, workers had little to say about their bosses, or only positive things about their treatment.

In her book on feminist fieldwork, Sherryl Kleinman (2007) writes that sometimes the topics that participants systematically do *not* discuss are important data themselves, and refers to them as "patterned absences." I came to find the lack of complaints about work or bosses to be a patterned absence. Workers' lack of complaints about bosses seemed unusual to me—in any employment circumstance, it's rare for people not to have *some* qualms about their bosses, even when they aren't being mistreated per se. Carol and Elba were the only ones to complain about their treatment, and they have the freedom to

do so, since they have long since left the industry. In addition, workers' physical distance from institutions, their inability to access public transportation to access these institutions, and their language barrier, leaves them under conditions that would make it difficult to lodge a formal complaint. Some workers have access to kin networks outside of Springville, in places that have more resources, such as religious institutions serving Spanish-speaking immigrants. However, most members of these networks are undocumented themselves, and would arguably have limited resources to assist their H-2B relatives, as they are in a precarious legal situation themselves. Other scholars have documented the ways isolated work environments place migrants in vulnerable situations (Hagan 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001), including other H-2B industries (Donato 2005).

In sum, in the likely event that the United States continues its guestworker programs, legislators should restructure them in ways that would make workers in precarious situations less vulnerable to employer exploitation. The proposed "W" visa, which would replace H-2A and H-2B visas, was developed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO, and includes clear improvements. Importantly, it would allow workers to bring spouses and minor children, which would help address the issues of family separation and barriers to settlement set out in this paper.

In addition, the proposed visa includes a "portability" provision, which would allow workers to change employers. On the surface, this is an important step to increasing worker autonomy. However, the provision has limitations, as workers' rights advocates have pointed out: workers must find the new job within 60 days, and for those with few English skills and no social networks, this may present a formidable challenge (Mitchell 2013). The W visa would no longer relegate workers to "temporary" status, as it would

allow them to apply for a green card—however, applications must be petitioned by their registered employer (Mitchell 2013), which reinforces workers’ dependence on employers. Although these steps are improvements, a better approach would include more involvement from third-party institutions in order to mediate the control of employers over workers, particularly in industries where workers are geographically isolated from service providers. Considering the actual lived experiences of migrant workers is critical to creating more just policies that would protect workers from violations of workers’ rights and subtle forms of employer control.

This study suggests future opportunities for research in *jaiberas*’ sending communities to investigate firsthand the ways that family members who are left behind negotiate the absence of their mothers and wives. My study primarily focused on the accounts of the women—mothers and wives. Speaking with husbands, female kin who care for children, and the children themselves would add a valuable transnational perspective on impacts in sending community households. For example, interviews with husbands might provide more information about the conditions under which women’s absences lead to a more equitable division of labor in the household, and whether these changes are short-term strategies or have in-depth impacts on men’s gender ideologies.

Current debate over comprehensive immigration reform provides a timely opportunity to study *jaiberas*’ experiences in the wake of potentially changing regulations. Should Congress pass the proposed ‘W’ visa, which would provide guestworkers a pathway to citizenship for themselves and their families, more long-term research would give

valuable insight into the ways women and their families make decisions about settlement under changing legal contexts.



## APPENDIX A: CURRENT H-2B INTERVIEW GUIDE<sup>11</sup>

Where are you from?

How old are you?

What is your marital status?

What is your level of education?

What is your current job?

### **Migration/work story:**

***First, I'd like to talk about your work experience in Mexico and here in the United States.***

#### *México*

- Did you work in Mexico before you came here?
- What was your first job in Mexico?
  - How old were you when you started your first job in Mexico?
  - How did you get this job?
- What other jobs have you had in Mexico? How did you get these Jobs?
- Before you migrated, did you ever work in *la jaiba* in Mexico? How did you get the job of *jaibera*?
  - How long did you work at the plant in Mexico
  - Were all of the employees in the plant women, or were there men?
  - Could you please explain to me the difference between the job that the men did and the Jobs that the women did in this plant?
  - Were there women in your family who worked in this plant? Were any of them migrants?

#### *United States*

- How many years have you been working here in the U.S?
  - Have you always worked in Springville/Riverview, or have you worked in other places?
- How did you get your first job in the United States? What was the process like?
- How did you arrive at the decision to come to the United States?
- Were you married the first time you came here? Did you have children?

---

<sup>11</sup> English translation—all interviews were conducted in Spanish. I included several probes in the interview guide, but I conducted most interviews as an open-ended conversation. Some interviewees were very forthcoming without much prompting, and in these cases, I did not need to follow the guide closely

- What did your spouse think?
- What was your experience like the first time you came here?
- How has your experience changed during the years that you've been here, since that first time?
- Did you have friends or family members in the plant when you first came? Do you still?
- What type of work do you do?
  - Do you always do the same job or does it ever change?
  - During the workweek, what is a typical day like for you?
  - Do you like doing this type of work? Why/why not?
  - Do you earn hourly or by the pound? If I may ask, how much do you earn?
  - Do you earn more here than in Mexico?
  - Is the work similar to the work you did in Mexico? How is it different?
- Are all of the employees here Mexicans, or are there American workers?
  - How do you all get along?
  - Do you ever spend time with them outside of work?
- Do you know how many employees there are in this plant? Does everyone come with an H-2B visa?
- How many men work here? What kind of work do the men do, and what kind of jobs do the women do?
- Do you know why they prefer women for some jobs, and men for others?

### **Life in Springville/Riverview:**

#### ***What is life like here in Springville?***

- What do you do with your free time and during the weekends?
  - What is there to do here?
  - Do you ever have the opportunity to go out? Where do you go, and what do you do?
  - How do you get around?
  - Have you ever travelled to visit other parts of the country?
- What are the American people like here? Do you have any American friends?
- Are there other Hispanic or Mexican people who live in this community?

- How do you get along with the other women here?
- Have you learned any English here?
  - How did you learn? (OR why do you think you haven't learned much?)
  - When do you have the opportunity to speak English
  - Have you ever had the opportunity to take an English class? Where?
- How is your life different here than it is in Mexico?

**Now I'd like to talk about your spouse and your family. Is that ok?**

- You said you are (married/single/separated), right?
- Where does your spouse live?
- What type of work does s/he do?
- Has your spouse ever come to the United States to work?
  - Where? What type of work? Were you together?
  - Why hasn't s/he returned?
- What did your spouse say when you first wanted to come here?
- What does he think about you working here now?
- Do you have children? How many? How old are they?
  - Who takes (took) care of them while you are working here?
  - (Grown children): Where do your children live?
  - Do they have any interest to come here?
- How do you and your spouse manage family responsibilities while you are away?
- How do you stay in contact with your family in Mexico?
  - How frequently are you in contact?
  - Do you have a mobile phone? What did you do before you had a mobile phone?
- Do you send money back to your family in Mexico
  - Where can you send it from?
  - Who do you send it to?
  - What do they use it for?
- Would you say that working here is important for the well-being of your family? How?

- Do you think your children have had more opportunities because of your work here? Which ones?
- Do you have other family in the U.S., or is everyone in Mexico? (Your parents, siblings, aunts and uncles)
  - Where do they live?
  - How long have they been here?
  - Do you ever get the chance to visit them?

*Return*

- Do you return to Mexico every year? When?
- How long do you stay there?
- What do you do during this time?
- What does it feel like when you return?
- What are you going to do when you go back this year?
- Do you work in Mexico? What do you do?
  - If not, why not?

***What are your plans for the future?***

- Have you ever thought about staying here? Why (not)?
- How long do you plan to keep working in *la jaiba* in the United States? Why?
- Have you ever thought about looking for other jobs?

## APPENDIX B: FORMER H-2B INTERVIEW GUIDE

### **Basic demographic:**

Age

City of birth

Current city of residence

Highest education level achieved

-Mexico or U.S.?

Marital status: single, married, divorced, separated, widowed

### **Migration/work story:**

**First, I'd like to talk about your work history both in Mexico and here in the United States**

#### ***Mexico***

- How old were you when you first started working in Mexico? Were you still in school?
- What was your first job?
- What other jobs did you have? (get detailed info about these jobs—esp. how they got them)
- Before migrating, did you work in crab in Mexico? Where?
- How old were you when you started working at the plant in Mexico?
- How did you get the job of *jaibera* (crab worker) in Mexico?
- What kind of work were you doing?
- Were all of the employees women? (ask about gendered jobs)
- If I may ask, how much did you typically earn in this job?
- Before migrating, did you know any women in your town that worked in the crab plant in the U.S.? In your family?
  - Were some of them migrants?

#### ***U.S.: Crab***

- How did you get your first job in the U.S.? What was the process?
- How old were you the first time you came to work in the U.S.? Were you married at this time? Did you have any children?

- How did you decide to come to the United States? Why did you want to come?
- Did you make the decision alone or was it a family decision?
  - What did your family think about the decision?
- How many years did you work in the H-2B program in the U.S.?
- Where were you working—which plant? Did you always work there, or did you work in other places?
- What kind of work were you doing? Did it ever change, or did you always do the same thing?
- When you were working at the plant, were all of the employees Mexican H-2Bs, or were there American employees?
  - If American employees, ask about inter-group relationships (were they friendly, did they spend time together outside of work)
- Were all of the workers women? (If there were men, ask how many/gendered jobs)
- Were you paid hour, or by the pound? (If pound how much per pound?)
- How much did you typically get paid—was it much more than you would have been paid in Mexico?
- Did you send money back to your family in Mexico?
- What was your experience like living and working in Springville (or whatever city)?
  - What did you like about living there?
  - What didn't you like about living there?
- Where did you live? How many roommates did you have? What was the house like where you were living?
- What did you do with your free time?
- Did you have friends or family in the plant the first time you came? What about now—do you still have friends or family who work there?
- When you returned home during the winter, did you continue working in Mexico?
- How did you stay in contact with your family in Mexico? How often could you talk with them?

- Why did you decide to stop working in the H-2B program?
- What year did you leave the plant?
- Why did you decide to stay in the U.S. after you left (instead of going back to Mexico)?

***Post-H-2B Experience***

***Now I'd like to talk about your experience after you left the H-2B program.***

- What happened after you left the plant---where did you go, with whom, etc.?
- Where did you live?
- Did you always stay here in the United States or have you ever returned to live in Mexico?
- What was your first job after you left the crab plant?
- How did you find this job? Did anyone help you get the job (Family or friends)?
- What kind of things were you doing in this job?
- Did the skills you learned from any of your previous jobs help you with your new job in the U.S.? Explain.
- How long did you stay in this job?
- Why did you leave?
- What other jobs have you had?
  - How did you get this job? Did anyone help you get it? Who?
  - What kind of things were you doing in this job?
  - Did the skills you learned from any of your previous jobs help you with your new job in the U.S.? Explain
  - How long did you stay in this job?
  - Why did you leave?
- What is your current job?
  - How did you get this job? Did anyone help you get it? Who?
  - What kind of things were you doing in this job?
  - Did the skills you learned from any of your previous jobs help you with your new job in the U.S.? Explain
  - Are your coworkers all Americans or are there other people from Mexico?

- Has your income increased a lot since you worked as a *jaibera*?
- Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your work experience?

### **English**

- Did you know any English the first time you came to the United States?
- How did you learn English?
- Was it difficult to learn English when you were living in Springville (or other crab plant locale)? If so, why?
- How is English important in your job now?
- Does being bilingual give you an advantage in your work? How so?

### **Now I'd like to talk a little about your family. Is that okay?**

#### *Spouse*

- Earlier, you told me you were (married/separated), right?
- How long have you been married? / If I may ask, how long have you been separated?
- How did you meet your spouse? Did you meet in Mexico, or here in the United States?
- What kind of work does/did your husband do?
- Were you married the first time you came to the United States?

#### *Children*

##### ***Do you have children? How many? How old are they?***

- Did you have children the first time you came to work in the United States?
- (If had children): Did they stay behind in Mexico
  - Who took care of them while you were away?
  - Do they currently live in Mexico, or here with you in the United States?
- (If children live in U.S.) Do your children participate in many activities? Like school, church, or sports activities?
- (If children live in U.S.) Do your children speak Spanish, English, or both?
- Which language do they prefer speaking at home?
- (If children live in U.S.) Do your children ever visit Mexico?
- Are your children in school/do they work?

#### *Other family*

- Do you have other family in the U.S., or are they mostly in Mexico (your parents, brother and sisters, aunts and uncles)?
- If in U.S.—where do they live? Do you see them often?
- How do you stay in contact with your family in Mexico?
  - How often are you in touch?
  - Do you ever send money back?



- Do you ever go home to visit them? Do they ever come here to visit you?
- Do they come visit you? How often?
- Do you ever visit them?

**Life in new city:**

***How is life here in --?***

- What's it like living here? Do you like it?
- What do you do with your free time, during the weekends?
- Besides work, are you involved with any organizations—like church or other community activities?
- Are there many other Mexicans or Latinos who live in this community?
- Would you say your friends are mostly American, mostly Mexican or Latino, or both?
- In your opinion, what are the most important resources or places in (current city) for Mexicans or immigrant families?
- How does -- compare with life in Springville? Is it very different?
- How is your life in the U.S. different than it was in Mexico?

**What are your plans for the future?**

- Do you plan to stay in the United States permanently? Why or why not?

**Do you know many other women like yourself who used to work in the crab industry and have since stayed in North Carolina? Do you think any of them would be willing to do interviews with me?**

## REFERENCES

- Acker, Joan. 1990. "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations." *Gender & Society* 4(2):139-158.
- Azripe, Lourdes and Josefina Aranda. 1981. "The 'Comparative Advantages' of Women's Disadvantages: Women Workers in the Strawberry Export Agribusiness in Mexico." *Signs* 7(2):453-473.
- Bacon, David. 2012. "How US Policies Fueled Mexico's Great Migration." *The Nation*, Jan 23, 2012 (<http://www.thenation.com/article/165438/how-us-policies-fueled-mexicos-great-migration>)
- Bada, Xótcil, Jonathan Fox, Robert Donnelly, and Andrew Selee. 2010. "Context Matters: Latino Immigrant Civic Engagement in Nine US Cities, Reports on Latino Immigrant Civic Engagement." Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.
- Burawoy, Michael. 1976. "The Functions and Reproduction of Migrant Labor: Comparative Material from Southern Africa and the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 81(5):1050-1087.
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Cobb-Clark, Deborah and Sherrie A. Kossoudji. 2000. "Mobility in El Norte: The Employment and Occupational Changes of Unauthorized Latin American Women." *Social Science Quarterly* 81(1):311-324.
- Contreras, Ricardo and David C. Griffith. 2012. "Managing Migration, Managing Motherhood: The Moral Economy of Gendered Migration." *International Migration* 50(4):51-66.
- Donato, Katharine M. and Carl L. Bankston, III. 2008. "The Origins of Employer Demand for Immigrants in a New Destination: The Salience of Soft Skills in a Volatile Economy." Pp. 124-148 in *New Faces in New Places: The Changing Geography of American Immigration*, edited by Douglas S. Massey. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Donato, Katharine M., Melissa Stainback, and Carl L. Bankston III. 2005. "The Economic Incorporation of Mexican Immigrants in Southern Louisiana: A Tale of Two Cities." Pp. 76-99 in *New Destinations: Mexican Immigration in the United States*, edited by Víctor Zúñiga and Rubén Hernández-León. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Donato, Katharine M., Charles Tolbert, Alfred Nucci, and Yukio Kawano. 2008. "Changing Faces, Changing Places: The Emergence of New Nonmetropolitan Immigrant Gateways." Pp. 75-98 in *New Faces in New Places: The Changing Geography of*

- American Immigration*, edited by Douglas S. Massey. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Dreby, Joanna. 2010. *Divided by Borders: Mexican Migrants and their Children*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Dreby, Joanna. 2006. "Honor and Virtue: Mexican Parenting in the Transnational Context." *Gender & Society* 20(1):32-59.
- Durand, Jorge, Douglas S. Massey, and Chiara Capoferro. 2005. "The New Geography of Mexican Immigration." Pp. 1-20 in *New Destinations: Mexican Immigration in the United States*, edited by Víctor Zúñiga and Rubén Hernández-León. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Durand, Jorge, Douglas S. Massey, and Emilio A. Parrado. 1999. "The New Era of Mexican Migration to the United States." *The Journal of American History* 86(2):518-536.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara and Arlie Russell Hochschild, eds. 2003. *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. New York: Metropolitan Books.
- Enloe, Cynthia H. 2004. *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Espiritu, Yen Le. 1997. *Asian American Women and Men*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fry, Richard. 2006. *Gender and Migration*. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center.
- Geddes, Elizabeth Ann. 2013. "The H-1B Visa Program: Its Contradictory Perception and Why the U.S. Must Increase the Visa Cap." *The National Law Review*.  
<http://www.natlawreview.com/article/h-1b-visa-program-its-contradictory-perception-and-why-us-must-increase-visa-cap>
- Goffman, Erving. 1961. *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1962.
- Goldring, L. 1996. "Gendered Memory: Constructions of Rurality Among Mexican Transnational Migrants." Pp. 303-29 in *Creating the Countryside: The Politics of Rural and Environmental Discourse*, edited by E.M. DuPuis. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Granovetter, Mark S. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78(6):1360-1380.
- Grasmuck, Sherri and Patricia R. Pessar. 1991. *Between Two Islands: Dominican International Migration*. University of California Press.

- Griffith, David C. 1999. *The Estuary's Gift: An Atlantic Coast Cultural Biography*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press.
- Griffith, David C. 2005 "Rural Industry and Mexican Immigration" Pp. 50-75 in *New Destinations: Mexican Immigration in the United States*, edited by Víctor Zúñiga and Rubén Hernández-León. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Griffith, David C., 2006. *American Guestworkers: Jamaicans and Mexicans in the U.S. Labor Market*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Griffith, David C. 2008. "New Midwesterners, New Southerners: Immigration Experiences in Four Rural American Settings" Pp. 179-210 in *New Faces in New Places: The Changing Geography of American Immigration*, edited by Douglas S. Massey. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Hagan, Jacqueline M. 1998. "Social Networks, Gender, and Immigrant Incorporation: Resources and Constraints." *American Sociological Review* 63(1):55-67.
- Hagan, Jacqueline, Nichola Lowe, and Christian Quingla. 2011. "Skills on the Move: Rethinking the Relationship Between Human Capital and Immigrant Economic Mobility." *Work and Occupations* 38(2):149-178.
- Hahamovitch, Cindy. 2003. "Creating Perfect Immigrants: Guestworkers of the World in Historical Perspective 1." *Labor History* 44(1):69-94.
- Hamilton, Nora and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla. 1996. "Global Economic Restructuring and International Migration: Some Observations Based on the Mexican and Central American Experience." *International Migration* 34(2):195-231.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 1979. "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure." *American Journal of Sociology* 85(3):551-575.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 1989. "The Economy of Gratitude" Pp. 95-113 in *The Sociology of Emotions: Original Essays and Research Papers*, edited by David D. Franks and E. Doyle McCarthy. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette. 1992. "Overcoming Patriarchal Constraints: The Reconstruction of Gender Relations among Mexican Immigrant Women and Men." *Gender & Society* 6(3): 393-415.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette. 1994. *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette. 2001. *Doméstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette. 2013. "New Directions in Gender and Immigration Research." Pp. 181-188 in *The Routledge International Handbook of Migration Studies*, edited by Steven J. Gold and Stephanie J. Nawyn. New York: Routledge.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette and Ernestine Avila. 1997. "'I'm Here, But I'm There': The Meanings of Latina Transnational Motherhood." *Gender & Society* 11(5):548-571.
- Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI). 2010. Encuesta Nacional de Ocupación y Empleo. Aguascalientes, Mexico.
- Kalleberg, Arne. 2011. *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs: The Rise of Polarized and Precarious Employment Systems in the United States, 1970s-2000s*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Kleinman, Sherryl. 2007. *Feminist Fieldwork Analysis*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications
- Kleinman, Sherryl and Martha A. Copp. 1993. *Emotions and Fieldwork*. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications
- Kochhar, Rakesh, Roberto Suro, and Sonya Tafoya. 2005. "The New Latino South: The Context and Consequences of Rapid Population Growth." Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center.
- Krissman, Fred. 2005. "Sin Coyote ni Patrón: Why the "Migrant Network" Fails to Explain International Migration." *International Migration Review* 39(1):4-44.
- Leach, Mark A. and Frank D. Bean. 2008. "The Structure and Dynamics of Mexican Migration to New Destinations in the United States." Pp. 51-74 in *New Faces in New Places: The Changing Geography of American Immigration*, edited by Douglas S. Massey. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- López-Sanders, Laura. 2012. "Bible Belt Immigrants: Latino Religious Incorporation in New Immigration Destinations." *Latino Studies* 10:128-154.
- Mahler, Sarah J. and Patricia R. Pessar. 2006. "Gender Matters: Ethnographers Bring Gender from the Periphery Toward the Core of Migration Studies." *International Migration Review* 40(1):27-63.
- Massey, Douglas, Rafael Alarcon, Jorge Durand, and Humberto Gonzalez. 1987. *Return to Aztlan: The Social Process of Migration from Western Mexico*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Massey, Douglas, Joaquín Arango, Graeme Hugo, Ali Kouaouci, Adela Pellegrino, and J. Edward Taylor. 1998. *Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium*. Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press.

- Massey, Douglas S., Jorge Durand and Nolan J. Malone. 2002. *Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in an Era of Economic Integration*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Menjívar, Cecilia. 2006. "Liminal Legality: Salvadoran and Guatemalan Immigrants' Lives in the United States." *American Journal of Sociology* 111(4):999-1037.
- Mitchell, Chip. 2013. "Proposed Visa Could Tie More Foreigners to Abusive Employers." WBEZ 91.5, Chicago Public Radio, May 9, 2013.  
<http://www.wbez.org/news/proposed-visa-could-tie-more-foreigners-abusive-employers-107114>.
- Mohl, Raymond A. 2003. "Globalization, Latinization, and the Nuevo New South." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 22(4):31-66.
- Morgan, David L. 2008. "Snowball Sampling." In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research*, edited by Lisa M. Given (Ed.) *Methods*. (pp. 816-817). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Parreñas, Rhacel S. 2001. *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration and Domestic Work*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Parreñas, Rhacel S. 2011. *Illicit Flirtation: Labor, Migration, and Sex Trafficking in Tokyo*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Raynolds, Laura T. 2001. "New Plantations, New Workers: Gender and Production Politics in the Dominican Republic." *Gender & Society* 15(1):7-28.
- Ribas, Vanesa. 2012. "Prismatic Engagement: Latino and African American Workers' Encounters in a Southern Meatpacking Plant." PhD dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.
- Romero, Mary. 2002. *Maid in the U.S.A.* 10th anniversary ed. New York: Routledge.
- Sassen, Saskia. 1984. "Notes on the Incorporation of Third World Women into Wage-Labor Through Immigration and Off-Shore Production." *International Migration Review* 18(4):1144-1167.
- Stark, Oded. 1991. *The Migration of Labor*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Stark, Oded, and David E. Bloom. 1985. "The New Economics of Labor Migration." *The American Economic Review* 75(2): 173-178.
- Tyner, James A. 2003. "The Global Context of Gendered Labor Migration from the Philippines to the United States." Pp. 63-80 in *Gender and U.S. Immigration*, edited by Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo. Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press.

United States Census Bureau. 2010. "North Carolina: Profile of General Population and Housing Characteristics: 2010 Demographic Profile Data."

Waldinger, Roger D. and Michael I. Lichter. 2003. *How the Other Half Works: Immigration and the Social Organization of Labor*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Waters, Mary C. 1999. *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities*. New York; Cambridge, Mass.: Russell Sage Foundation; Harvard University Press.

Zúñiga, Víctor and Rubén Hernández-Léon, eds. 2006. *New Destinations: Mexican Immigration in the United States*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.